Time to Quit the Trough
Helen Szamuely

Portugal’s Saviour
Nigel Jones

Global Warming: Beyond Belief
Brian Ridley

Learn Now Pay Later
Theodore Dalrymple

Save the Family
Jane Kelly

Spring 2010

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*The Third Marquis of Salisbury*
The political parties at this election are reminiscent of the big dance bands of the 1930’s. The lyrics they offer, while competing in volume and brassiness, are identical. Choreographed by the ruthless millionaire impresarios of the BBC, troupes of political dancers cross the stage in perfect rhythm, each with an earphone plugged into party HQ. Yesterday it was ‘Swine Flu Swing’, today ‘Global Warming Tango’. Next week we will have ‘Megan’s Song’, or spot the paedophile in your neighbourhood. Each number outdoes the last in its triviality and irrelevance.

At intervals ‘Prudence’ Brown and ‘Cast Iron’ Cameron (of the ‘cast iron promise’ of a vote on Europe?) announce rivers of gold for Britain at the Olympics, degrees for all including those who can barely read and write, tax bribes, bigger stadia and improved versions of our state religion, the National Health Service, the envy of the world. Unpleasantries, like the struggle for cheap oil for which our soldiers must die, imprisonment without trial, the opening of everyone’s correspondence, the electronic tagging of the population by means of their passports, the wrecking of our schools and universities, the sale of our industries on the cheap, the importation of millions of labourers willing to work for slave wages in return for the future ownership of our country — the price we have to pay for politicians’ promises — are never mentioned.

It is why we have the war against terror; a war we would never have had to fight if we had not opened the gates to all comers, or decided instead of real work to live off the loose change of the cardsharps of the Square Mile. Weeping in the streets of Wootton Bassett over ‘our fallen boys’ cannot hide the fact we have become either a nation of illiterate, complaining louts sponging off state benefits, or middle-class whingers led by government spivs, living on credit and congratulating our children when they bring home degrees not worth the paper they are written on.

How are we to vote in such circumstances? Arnold Gill in ‘Don’t vote, it only encourages them’ will not be attending the polling station. But for those of us who intend to vote we offer a guide. Helen Szamuely in ‘Time to Quit the Trough’ tries to return some of our MPs to a sense of decency. Theodore Dalrymple in ‘Pay Now Learn Later’ lays a cane across the back of Britain’s education establishment and an ingenious way out for those who want to learn. Brian Ridley in ‘Global Warming: beyond belief?’ sets our minds at rest over this alarming theory, while in ‘Chinese Whispers’ Myles Harris warns of the threat posed by trading with the biggest and most murderous Mafia in the world, Communist China. In ‘Airhead of Alaska?’ Paul Gottfried discusses the life and political character of Sarah Palin, and, remaining abroad, Hugh Farquharson and Robert Stove examine the politics of the English speaking southern hemisphere in Letters from South Africa and Australia. Back home again in ‘Ministry of Tears’ Jan Davies examines the wrecking of childcare by the Independent Safeguarding Authority, while Jane Kelly in ‘Save the Family’ shows how children who have fallen by the wayside can be helped.

Finally we offer a selection from the BBC; liberal to a fault, slyly anti-white, hugely privileged, an organisation that has outstripped the importance of Parliament and dreams of unelected rule from Brussels. What would Gibbon make of this electronic senate besotted with the tribes of Germania over the people of Rome, yet so feared no politician dare speak without its approval?

He wrote: ‘…the trembling senate, without any hopes of relief, prepared by a desperate resistance to delay the ruin of their country. But they were unable to guard against the secret conspiracy of their slaves and domestics, who either from birth or interest were attached to the cause of the enemy. At the hour of midnight the Salarian gate was silently opened, and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet. Eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, the Imperial city, which had subdued and civilised so considerable a part of mankind, was delivered to the licentious fury of the tribes of Germany and Scythia.’
At the end of 2006 there was a routine kerfuffle about MPs’ pay with a number of them demanding that their salaries should be increased to £100,000 or so. Inevitably, there was an outcry and the Prime Minister decided to stop the increase. The following year the story repeated itself and so it went on until the MPs realized that there was a way round this whole problem. Instead of demanding an increase in pay and thus opening the door to a discussion as to what they actually do, they will vote themselves a new system of ‘expenses’ that, in effect, doubled their salaries without them having to pay any tax on the second half. That, in turn, came crashing down around them when the details were passed to journalists; there was an even bigger public outcry, a commission was set up and a new unaccountable quango created to supervise our elected representatives’ financial probity. Another move away from politics towards managerial bureaucracy. The main problem, however, has not been solved and in that connection it seems worth looking at the Open Letter I wrote at the end of 2006 to our so-called Legislators on the EU Referendum blog. It was sent to them but with very little result as they continued to behave like denizens of an ancien régime. To add to all their other sins, our MPs are sadly deficient in their knowledge of history.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the House of Commons,

I note in this morning’s newspaper that you have so far forgotten the honour that is being a Member of the House of Commons as to complain, not for the first time, about your remuneration. Apparently, the basic salary of £60,277 for a backbencher with an average allowance of £134,000 is insufficient for your individual needs or for the position you seek to occupy in society. And that is not reckoning the assured high pension out of public funds at a time when the Chancellor of the Exchequer has ensured that other pension funds get ever lower.

It seems that you feel that your salaries have fallen behind those of people in comparable occupations. Dear me. What comparable occupations would those be? I note that one MP, who had enough shame to want to remain anonymous, has groused that he was earning considerably less than the local GP.

This is not a particularly useful argument. In the first place, GPs pay their staff out of their basic salary. In the second place, GPs are not in a ‘comparable’ occupation. General Practitioners work and many of them work very hard. We know what they do. We see them when we are ill, when our children are ill, when our aged and not so aged relatives are ill.

What is it you do, ladies and gentlemen, that would justify yet another pay rise? Do you legislate? Well, not in the eighty per cent of the legislation that comes, one way or another, from the European Union and is passed on the nod because you do not have the right to reject or amend it. Let’s face it, you do not even bother to read most of it.

There is a lot of material there, I agree, but it is you and your equally greedy predecessors, who made sure of this state of affairs.

Let us not forget, Members of the House of Commons, that a good deal of that legislation does not even pass through Parliament. It arrives in the shape of EU Regulations, which are directly applicable and are put into place by Statutory Instruments, which you know nothing about, or regulations created by quangos such
as the Food Standards Agency.

What of the remaining twenty per cent of the legislation? Do you live up to the expectations of the people, whom you are supposed to represent? Do you read the legislative proposals or Green Papers or Bills? Do you realize how badly drafted many of the last are? It would appear not, as those badly drafted Bills wing their way through the House of Commons and it is only when the (unpaid) Members of the House of Lords start scrutinizing them, line by line, clause by clause (something you ought to do, Members of the House of Commons) that the full shoddiness or horror becomes clear.

It is not unknown for the Government to have to rush scores, even hundreds of amendments at a late stage, say Report, in the House of Lords, having not realized before what a mess the particular piece of legislation was. It is many years since the House of Commons has made any effort to scrutinize legislation with any attention. GPs who carried out their duties the way you do, would be struck off the Register of Medical Practitioners.

Do you take part in debates, ladies and gentlemen? Not if the evidence of those empty benches is anything to go by. Do you pay attention to political developments inside and outside the country? Again, the evidence of our senses tells us no. None of you seem to have the first idea about what is happening to this country’s defence; how business operates; the extent to which education has been destroyed; or, for that matter, what it is the people who elected you really care about.

It is well known among us political researchers that briefing MPs is a complete waste of time. They do not bother to read even the simplest and shortest text, unless it consists of a couple of sound bites that they can produce for a passing journalist or cameraman.

Do you ever attend political seminars or briefings organized by various think tanks? Nobody has seen a single one of you except on the rare occasion when a leading member of your party gives the talk. Then you strut around, hoping that your zeal will be noticed. But would you, ladies and gentlemen of the Conservative Party, attend a seminar on free markets given by some leading economist at the Institute of Economic Affairs, as Margaret Thatcher used to? Let me know when you intend to. I want to be there.

Ah yes, but there are constituency matters. How many surgeries do you hold. Members of the House of Commons? If other professionals attended as few meetings as you do, far from getting pay rises, they would be out on their ears.

Do you write the letters to your constituents or is there a hard-working and seriously underpaid secretary who does all that with the help of a not so hard-working but equally underpaid researcher? Unless, of course, the secretary or researcher happens to be your spouse/offspring/other relative.

Who are these people in ‘comparable occupations’ who can get away with as little work and be of as little use as you are? Why do you think that the number of people who can be bothered to vote for you decreases with every election?

You are, of course, in the fortunate position of being able to extract money from the public purse without having to prove to anyone that you deserve it, as you are, supposedly, the guardians of that purse. Try to recall what happened to the King who behaved that way. In fact, King Charles I’s belief in the divine right of kings was balanced by his belief in the duties of the monarch as well. Whether he fulfilled those duties well, is irrelevant. He believed he had them.

Do you believe you have duties to fulfil? Or have you simply inherited the mantle of the overbearing ruler without the knowledge or understanding of what that ruler saw as his task on this earth?

Members of the House of Commons, may I suggest that instead of demanding a greater share of the public wealth, which you have, in any case, managed to reduce through your incompetence and idleness, you start meditating on whether the people whom you are supposed to represent are likely to allow you to continue in your already overpaid position for much longer.

Helen Szamuely is a researcher and writer.
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
We live on a ball, captured in space by a star. Underneath us is a nuclear pile that, along with our star, keeps us warm. Without either, but especially the star, we would not be here. Enveloping us is the biosphere, a thin membrane whose thickness stretches from the deepest trenches of the ocean to the top of the atmosphere, a thickness roughly equal to the distance between London and Windsor. We somehow survive in spite of continental drift, earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, tsunamis, drought, sun moods, galaxy moods, and even ice ages. We not only survive but we go forth and multiply. We may not be able to match that formidable life force we call bacteria, but we have a darned good try. In a few more decades the number of us humans might be ten billion; if not the most prolific, definitely the brainiest. But in spite of being the biggest, brainiest biomass of the planet, we still can’t figure out how the biosphere works. Which is somewhat disturbing, considering how our lives and the lives of our children and of future generations depend upon it.

Our ignorance is scarcely surprising. The concept of the biosphere, and indeed that such a thing existed, is only a century old, dating from the book published in 1924 by the Russian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky (1863-1945). Dim intuitions triggered by the fledgling Victorian studies of the atmosphere, the oceans, geology and biology, eventually crystallized into a realisation that they were elements of a single entity, the biosphere. And what was new and highly relevant to us today was that living things on the planet had an influence as strong as any other. In the 1970s a new idea was added by the English scientist James Lovelock, who saw the Earth as a planet able to regulate its climate and its chemistry so as to stay comfortable for its living inhabitants, an idea that became known as the Gaia Hypothesis. Not all scientists go along with Lovelock’s idea, but they have certainly embraced the fact of the biosphere. But if the Gaia Hypothesis is true, doesn’t it mean we can relax about our possibly deleterious contributions to the atmosphere and let Gaia get on with sorting it out? Well, no; any self-regulation that goes on doesn’t mean that it will favour Homo sapiens. Gaia might decide that it and the rest of life would get on better without humanity. Especially as humans have added yet another layer to the planet which the Jesuit scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and others have called the noosphere — the planetary envelope of the mind. The biosphere was complicated enough without the phenomenon of mind to have evolved. But if the human brain was all that it was cracked up to be, it would be perfectly capable of looking after itself without any help from Gaia.

It is certainly up to us to acquire a true understanding of all those interactions that make up the biosphere. But that will not happen if it becomes a political or religious issue, which, unhappily, has tended to happen in the current debate about Global Warming. Politicians, eager to jump on to a bandwagon of voters, mouth certainties for which they have no authority. Priests of the environment preach their religious dogma about the effect on the planet of mankind’s sinful activities. Both politicians and priests know dogmatically that further debate is unnecessary, and attack virulently anyone who differs. Neither is a good advertisement for the noosphere!

The debate, of course, is far from over. Thankfully there are rational voices on both sides. The scientific fact that is not disputed is that there has been a steady rise in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, superimposed on which are wiggles that relate to the growth of vegetation in the spring and its decay in the autumn. It is further agreed that carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas, that is, it absorbs heat radiation from the earth and stops it escaping; so it acts like a blanket and is seen as a candidate that could produce global
Four hundred thousand years reveal marked fluctuations but not all is man-made. Evidence gleaned from the carbon dioxide, it is generally accepted that some processes, including heating, on a planetary scale has made? Our ability to observe a whole range of natural phenomena. The resultant graph of temperature against time showed a more or less flat curve from 1000AD to 1900AD followed by a precipitous rise to unusually high temperatures recorded in 1998. The whole curve looked like a hockey stick, and the name has become notorious. Not only was the well-attested Medieval Warm Period between roughly 1000AD and 1500AD totally absent, but so was the equally well-attested Little Ice Age between 1500 and 1900. Something was wrong and, indeed, a subsequent analysis by neutral scientists confirmed that those data were flawed. Nevertheless, the hockey stick convinced the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), and subsequently the politicians believed that global warming was a reality.

Climate scientists are divided. In spite of the flawed hockey stick data, some believed the computer simulations that predicted global warming, all programmed on the basis of the greenhouse effect associated with the increasing concentration of carbon dioxide. Others pointed to the influence of variations in solar radiation, cosmic rays, and the dominant role of water vapour (another powerful greenhouse gas). They questioned the reliability of those computer simulations, since none of these effects was taken into account.

So what are the big issues? Here are three. Is global warming a fact? Doesn’t the increasing concentration of carbon dioxide mean that global warming is inevitable? Is the increasing carbon dioxide man-made? Our ability to observe a whole range of natural processes, including heating, on a planetary scale has increased tremendously with the advent of orbiting satellites. Recent measurements of global temperatures show no warming since 1998, in spite of computer simulations predicting otherwise. This result may turn out to be a chance blip on an inexorable upward trend, a possibility that continuous satellite monitoring will either confirm or not. However that may be, it is now evident that the computer models used extensively to support the global warming case are as fatally flawed as the hockey stick. Nevertheless, increasing computer power and more sophisticated programming will be welcomed. As regards the origin of the increase of carbon dioxide, it is generally accepted that some but not all is man-made. Evidence gleaned from the analysis of air bubbles in polar ice whose ages span four hundred thousand years reveal marked fluctuations in carbon dioxide content, the origins of which cannot possibly be man-made. This shows that sources of atmospheric carbon dioxide other than from our power stations have to be taken into account.

Highly rational and reputable scientists are to be found on both sides of the debate, and they are to be distinguished from the political and religious fanatics. Warmists of whatever hue have been seriously let down by evidence of bad, and even fraudulent, science and by the unattractive dogmatism of the environmentalists. Sceptics have had their reasoned comments rejected by closed-minded editors of journals, and, in general, have had to bear a level of abuse of inquisitorial intensity. It is only recently that sceptical voices are being heard and listened to. Thomas Huxley, wryly described as Darwin’s bulldog for his feisty advocacy of the theory of evolution, once warned against a too-easy acceptance of a scientific discovery: ‘Belief, in the scientific sense of the word, is a serious matter and needs strong foundation.’ There is some foundation for a belief in global warming, but it is by no means strong.

Nevertheless, some good has come out of this tangled business. At least some of the increased carbon dioxide is undoubtedly man-made, and it would be imprudent not to find means to moderate that contribution, even if there is no scientific evidence of any deleterious effect. Currently our environmentalist politicians in the West seem hell-bent on returning our civilization to the Dark Ages by banning fossil-fuel burning power stations. China, India, Brazil and Russia will certainly not go along with that, though they will be quite happy cynically to exploit the market in carbon footprints. Discounting the temperamental panic and urgency of the environmentalists, it is in our power to find a range of technological solutions. These will involve a greater role for generating the energy our civilization needs from nuclear fission and future nuclear fusion. They will also include novel ways of capturing carbon dioxide. They will not dismiss the idea of renewable energy sources, but they will not take them too seriously. If we are allowed by crazed politicians and environmentalists to use the brains that nature gave us, we will sort it all out, and befriend Gaia. Sorting out technical problems is, after all, what science and technology are good at.

Above all, we need to get a better understanding of Gaia and the biosphere. Talk of ‘saving the planet’ has usually meant saving the planet from the depredations of mankind. More robustly, we should plan to save the planet for us and our noospheric civilization. We will only do that successfully if we heed Huxley, and grant belief in any scientific claim very sparingly. Which means for the most part, we should be beyond belief.

Brian Ridley is a Fellow of the Royal Society.
Institutions are like fortresses. They must be well designed and properly manned.

Karl Popper

The Parliamentary expenses scandal that broke in May 2009 has revealed in all its tawdriness what had long been suspected: that the main institution supposed to guarantee British democracy is far from being a fortress. Since the story first hit the headlines there has been no shortage of comment. Perhaps never before in the last two centuries has public scepticism about the moral character of both rulers and legislators been so pronounced and so openly expressed or has Parliament been held in so low esteem. Given the former prestige of Westminster and its institutions, none of this can be good for the cause of freedom in Britain or anywhere in the world.

And yet amid the explosion of outrage and righteous indignation, occasional hilarity and the odd proposal for reform, almost no reference has been made to either of the two greatest political thinkers of the last century. Were Karl Popper and Friedrich von Hayek alive today they would certainly have something to say. However, their works themselves are still alive and as relevant as when they were first written. Nevertheless there are reasons for ignoring Popper and Hayek. While current comment is centred chiefly on the more superficial aspects of the present constitutional malaise, both men, especially Hayek, were concerned with the need for far-reaching constitutional reform in its most basic sense. The electoral system and the supposed virtues of proportional representation; the character of candidates for each House; methods of overseeing members’ behaviour: these are really only epiphenomena of a constitutional crisis that has been long in the making. The architecture of government and the way its personnel are selected have long been showing that they contain within themselves the seeds of degeneration. Fifty years ago Hayek in *The Constitution of Liberty* analysed at some length how what is supposed to be a democratic system and the guarantor of citizens’ liberties has been gradually decaying and turning into its opposite: the main means of increasingly restricting freedom.

The point has now arrived where the Prime Minister, to correct an incorrigible situation, has taken steps which strike at the very heart of what is supposed to be constitutional doctrine. In setting up a committee, external to and independent of Parliament, a further blow has been struck at the historic principle of the sovereignty of Parliament which is supposed to mean the sovereignty of the people. If he really believed in this time-honoured principle Gordon Brown really had only one legitimate recourse: the dissolution of a corrupt Parliament and a general election. However, to admit openly that ‘Honourable’ Members were insufficiently worthy to continue to legislate for a further year would have been too grave an admission and one too near his own bone to bear the scrutiny of an election campaign. And in this decision, whatever it might have cost them, the overwhelming majority of his own MPs supported him. Better outside examiners appointed by the PM, they concluded, than an appeal to the electorate. At least postponement had the advantage of an extra year’s emoluments for these gentry and the ever-present hope of short public memory coming into play. Hence a general election has been postponed to the legal limit: the early summer of this year.

Hayek considers, and we can all see for ourselves, that there is in practice no effective separation of powers and no genuine system of checks and balances, while real power lies more and more in the hands of an unfettered ever-expanding bureaucracy, whose national variety has now been augmented by even more powerful and unaccountable functionaries of the European Union.

As far as that other principle, parliamentary sovereignty, is concerned, Hayek also demonstrates that an ‘omnipotent’ democratic government cannot by its nature exercise self-restraint. To keep the majority on which its power depends, it must satisfy the demands of innumerable special interests. It becomes what Hayek calls a ‘playball’ of these interests, in effect ‘a bargaining democracy’.

Given the involvement of members of all three parties, including their leaders, in the expenses scandal, it is hardly likely that any of these will be interested in giving the question of MPs’ expenses a significant place in their electoral programmes. Whether any of them will be concerned with the much larger question of constitutional reform itself is even more doubtful. And yet discussion of the latter is far more fundamental.
than the importance of the expenses scandal and its so-called solution. After all, an extra-parliamentary enquiry into the latter is scarcely more serious a blow against parliamentary sovereignty and the ideal of separation of powers than what is already in place: the excessive use of statutory instruments, the proliferation of quangos or, worst of all, the surrender of national sovereignty to Brussels without the consent of the electorate.

In the latter part of his life Hayek, economist, political thinker and Nobel prize-winner, devoted two large works to consideration of all the matters raised by the present constitutional crisis. Both The Constitution of Liberty, 1960, (CL) and its sequel Law, Legislation and Liberty, 1979 (LLL) were written with the aim of examining the possibilities of ruling a modern State while simultaneously promoting efficiency and safeguarding freedom. Hayek, like his friend and fellow Austrian Karl Popper, had personal experience of the processes that lead to the triumph of totalitarianism but, although their ideas overlap, their objectives were different. Popper, in his The Open Society and Its Enemies gives us what is mainly a historical analysis of the origins of totalitarianism, Hayek’s work is more concerned with the present state of democracy, how to halt its decay and safeguard its future.

Those acquainted with his work know that, as a political philosopher he was an enemy of constructivist rationalism based in Cartesian a priori reasoning. He believed in evolutionary epistemology: the idea that, as with biological species, cultural habits, practices and beliefs survive according to the extent to which they promote the survival of the society concerned. Habits and practices not conducive to survival tend to disappear while those that turn out to be favourable usually tend to persist and become part of tradition although most of traditions’ followers have no idea of how these arose in the first place. Nobody designed most of our social practices and institutions; nobody designed the Common Law just as nobody designed language.

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Hayek believed firmly in the need for separating the executive, legislative, and judicial functions of government and much of both CL and LLL explains why. He recommends a remodelling of the architecture of government and makes many interesting suggestions on how this architecture should be manned. There needs to be two chambers, one for legislating (or governmental assembly) and the other for overseeing this process and ensuring that the principles of the rule of law and respect for rules of just conduct are strictly followed. The executive should be a committee emanating from the governmental assembly and so subject to the same invigilation as the chamber from which it originated. Not so very different from what

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are supposed to be the traditional functions of the Commons and the Lords respectively, had these not degenerated into their present confusion. However, the devil, or in this case, the angel, is in the detail.

Hayek believes that a five-year Parliament is nothing like long enough for worthwhile legislative projects to be examined and executed. Moreover, five-year terms for both legislators and invigilators carry with them the ever-present risk of electoral considerations dominating the members’ spirits. Many measures are by their nature long-term. Educational reforms require more than half a lifetime to be carried through. Long-term investments such as those in transport, energy, or housing also require lengthy periods. As does the area of defence, given the high degree of technology which is nowadays involved in this area. This is why members of parliament are nowadays rarely motivated to concentrate on projects whose outcomes lie in the distant future and thus fail to provide possibilities of immediate electoral advantage.

Hayek therefore proposes that Parliaments should have a duration of fifteen years. But to avoid the problem of inevitable senescence producing an undesirable distance between government and governed, elections should be staggered (as already occurs for shorter periods in the United States and some municipal elections in the UK). So while Hayek suggests that members be elected for a fifteen year term, he adds that a third of places in both chambers be vacated every five years and replacements chosen thus ensuring a healthy turnover and the injection of new blood at regular intervals. To raise the prestige of Parliament and motivate candidates to stand for office, the practice should be developed of sending retirees at the end of their fifteen years to positions in the judiciary as lay judges or other offices where their experience would be valued.

Hayek criticises the way in which politics has become professionalized in the worst sense. Everybody knows that many members of the House of Commons are people who have never done anything else in their lives and are unfamiliar with practical affairs. If you have an email address it would be useful if you could email the Salisbury Review at info@salisburyreview.co.uk. This will help us to keep our costs down when sending renewal notices etc. We will not give out your details to any third party.

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Liberal Democrats and others who would lower the voting age to sixteen, Hayek would raise age limits, and nobody would be allowed to run for office until the age of 45, by which time he or she might have been able to display some proof of achievement in the world of industry, business, the professions or the arts. He would restrict candidates for office to an age range of 45 to 60 years and they would be chosen by their peers so the electorate would have to have reached 45 years of age. Fanciful as such age limits might appear in present conditions, it should not be forgotten that demographic projections indicate that not very far in the future a third of the population will be over 60, healthier than today and with a greater expectation of active life ahead of them.

But Hayek is no despiser of youth and recommends the formation of assemblies for young people whose function would be to debate politics and all aspects of government regularly, thus stimulating at local level a greater interest in political life.

To ensure effective separation of powers and the proper functioning of the institutions a Constitutional Court would be necessary and this, Hayek suggests, might well consist of judges and retired members of either house. Such a court would be the highest arbiter between the two houses and the ultimate guardian of the constitution.

Much of Hayek’s argument and his many examples have necessarily been omitted here, but for all interested in the defence of freedom and the factors fatally undermining it, a consultation of his work is highly recommended if a fruitful debate is to be established.

Patricia Lana, who holds both Portuguese and British nationality, was a deputy in the Portuguese Parliament from 1987 to 1991.
A question has been at the back of my mind for a long time now, nagging away at me like a tiny thorn in my skin after blackberrying. The question is this: how is it possible for so many children, not of defective intelligence, to emerge from an education costing approximately £60,000 per child, still unable to perform the simplest arithmetical operations and almost totally ignorant of history, geography and many other subjects? How is this miracle of inefficiency performed?

I do not have time to present the evidence that many children do, in fact, emerge from so expensive an education in so parlous a state of ignorance. Suffice it to say that approximately half of the people aged between 16 and 25 whom I encountered in my work as a doctor in what is called a ‘deprived area’ replied to the question, ‘Are you good at arithmetic’ with a question of their own: ‘What is arithmetic?’

It would be comforting to think that they were good in practice at what they could not name; but they were not. Moreover, I recently interviewed a student at a university, studying a vocational subject in which arithmetical calculations are often necessary, who could not multiply six by seven, except by counting it out laboriously on his fingers. Only the British state could perform this miracle.

Reading James Tooley’s book recently about the way in which many poor people in India and Africa are sending their children to tiny private schools rather than leave them to the cold mercies of the state system (a book which, remarkably for such a subject, has several very funny passages), I was suddenly struck by a solution to the educational problems of our own dear country. Let me now put forward some modest proposals.

The first is this: that at its birth, each child has the £60,000 that would otherwise be spent on its education set aside in an investment account for it, untouchable (except in circumstances that I shall soon describe) until it reaches the age of 30. This money would be held in a variety of commercial funds so that it is unlikely all to be lost, and most likely by the time the child reached 30 would be a very considerable sum. The quid pro quo for this, of course, would be that the state made no provision for the education of children whatsoever. Not only would education not be compulsory, but children could legally start to work for gain from the age of 14.

Parents would have to make the arrangements themselves for the children’s education, thus bringing about very cheap local private schools that would be run as businesses, no doubt many of them by the mass of teachers no longer employed by the state. There would be an inspection of these schools, not as to the quality of the teaching or education imparted in them, but only to deter and weed out the most obvious, Wackford Squeers-type abuses and cruelties. Otherwise, what the schools taught, apart from political extremism (a matter for the police), would be up to them. There would be no Ministry of Education; and, in order to qualify for their unemployment benefit, the redundant educational bureaucrats could be put to socially useful labour, such as sweeping our disgracefully littered streets. They would not be replaced after retirement.

There would be no penalty for failing to send children to school; but historical experience suggests that most parents would send their children to school in any case. It is a great mistake to think that the Education Act of 1870 was the beginning of education for the poor in this country. No doubt under my proposals there would be some fallers-by-the-wayside, the children of parents who could not or would not send their children to school; but it is a fair bet that under my proposal, truanting would be less than it is now. Parents who paid directly for the education of their children would be more likely to take an active interest in the education their children actually received, and how their children behaved.

When a child reached the university age, he would be able to use his accumulated funds to pay for his further education, for which he would likewise receive no assistance from the state. This means that he would be encouraged to think very carefully about the further education he was to likely to receive at the university: would it be worthwhile to him either intellectually or economically to deprive himself of some or all of the money held in trust for him until he was thirty? (The decision to use the money for a university education could be made any time between the age 18 and 30, after which age the money would be handed over for the person to do with it whatever he wanted.)

This would have another highly beneficial effect. The universities would have to ensure that the education they provided was of real economic or intellectual value to students, ideally of course both. They would be free to set any entry requirement they liked, without
government interference. They would have a vested interest in maintaining high and uncorrupted standards. This would also bring an end to tertiary education as the means by which youth unemployment is disguised. It would mean that graduates would not only enter the adult world with a genuinely useful education, but that they would not have indebted themselves to obtain it. The increased salaries that they received as a consequence of being university-educated would be free of all encumbrances. And such a system would encourage the re-establishment of apprenticeship as the means by which so many important things ought to be taught.

One possible objection to my modest proposals might be that they would lead to laziness and lack of ambition among some of those who knew that, at the age of 30, they would receive a large sum of money for their personal use. But most would understand perfectly well that, large as it was, that sum would be insufficient to keep them for the rest of their lives. On the contrary, it would encourage many of them to start businesses of their own, and give them the wherewithal to do so.

I remember a pop song a few years ago whose chorus ran ‘We don’t need no education.’ This is obvious nonsense. Under my dispensation, the chorus would become ‘We don’t need no Ministry of Education.’ This is obviously true.

Theodore Dalrymple’s most recent book is Second Opinion (Monday Books)
It is now seventeen months since Thabo Mbeki was deposed as President of the African National Congress, at its quadrennial conference in Limpopo Province, in the far North of the country. His deposition was engineered by an alliance of the Confederation of South African Trades Unions, or Cosatu, the South African Communist Party (SACP), and a newly emerging political force, the ANC Youth League (ANCYL). In the fall-out from this defenestration, Mbeki felt obliged to resign as President of the Republic, though under no constitutional obligation to do so. Pending new elections, an ANC stalwart little known to the public at large was appointed interim President. This exercise prepared the ground for Jacob Zuma’s election to the Presidency last April.

Severe misgivings were raised in the press and among people who deplored Mbeki’s political assassination. The ANC Old Guard were aghast at the apparent collapse of the ANC’s high-minded principles, exemplified by Nelson Mandela, and the ill-concealed jostling for places on the ANC’s gravy train, while others doubted if Zuma could possibly turn out to be a ‘good’ President. These doubts had much to go on. He had recently been acquitted of a rape charge in somewhat murky circumstances, his financial consultant had been sent down for 15 years on corruption charges: indeed, he was held by the Court to have had a ‘generally corrupt’ relationship with Zuma who himself had been facing a scarcely believable 385 charges of corruption. On top of this, he had been due, some years earlier, to appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to answer questions about his role as ANC enforcer-in-exile and the unexplained disappearance of some ANC cadres who had incurred the leadership’s displeasure. Zuma declined to show up; he was clearly a populist given to singing his trade-mark anthem, ‘Bring Me My Machine Gun’ to enthusiastic crowds. Nonetheless, the election passed off in orderly manner, Zuma was confirmed as President of the RSA, and we all waited to see what would happen. Nine months later there have been few signs of the direction being chosen for us. While nothing has been done to frighten the horses, little has been done to suggest remedies for our ills, while Cosatu, the SACP and the ANCYL seem to be making most of the running in policy making.

Although the South African economy has been affected by the current world-wide recession, its impact has been less severe than in many other countries, largely due to the sensible economic policies adopted by the conservatively-minded Treasury, led by Trevor Manuel, and to the sound policies of the Central Bank headed by Tito Mboweni. The World Economic Forum recently opined that South Africa now has the fifth-best financial system in the world, beaten only by Luxembourg, Switzerland, Canada and Sweden. The South African Revenue Service, the nation’s tax collector, has also done a good job in helping to keep the country’s finances in order. Indeed, their practices are now being emulated elsewhere. But the people who helped get Zuma his presidency don’t quite see it that way. Not unexpectedly, they believe State largesse should be flowing their way regardless of the consequences.

So there the good news seems to stop. There are a number of systemic problems, which simply are not being addressed, and one is uneasily beginning to wonder if the Government has the means, or even the will, to tackle them in an effective manner. The main problems are: political corruption and managerial incompetence at all levels of the country’s administration, the ineffectiveness of the various police services, the burgeoning problems associated with criminality, and the deteriorating state of our roads, water services and sewage treatment plants. If anyone knows how much it will cost to put these right, no one is saying. Add to this the collapse of the public sector’s medical services and the outlook is grim, especially if you are ill or injured or unable to afford private medical insurance, which means most people. The grim joke has it that if you want to commit suicide, check into a Government hospital. In other words, the currently strong Rand, while acknowledging the prudent management of the economy, seems to be discounting the gaping black holes in the nation’s finances which will have to be met somehow if South Africa is to maintain her standing as Africa’s Superpower.

There are in fact over 250 municipalities in South Africa and nearly all suffer from financial disorder or outright disarray. Public infrastructure, such as water, sewage works, housing and roads, is all too often falling apart and municipal services are often chaotic. Some municipal residents have resorted to violent demonstrations to make their point. To his credit,
President Zuma has visited some of the worst affected townships. One such was the Mpumalanga (formerly Eastern Transvaal) town of Balfour where he surprised the mayor happily snoozing at home. The residents were determined to show how the ANC’s barons were defying the ANC’s own objectives and busily looting the local administration’s coffers for their own benefit. It seems that many such local grandees happen to be former ANC exiles who were rewarded by being given these posts, regardless of suitability, which appointments were joyously seized upon as a wonderful opportunity to cash in. Similarly, Cosatu and the SACP want to be rewarded for helping Zuma become President and are clamouring for seats on the national and provincial bodies responsible for handing out the jobs. The more traditional ANC stalwarts, who carried on the freedom struggle at home and did not go into exile, are, unsurprisingly, battling to keep the Party for themselves.

To illustrate what this can mean, at a recent ANC party meeting in Lusikisiki, in the ANC’s Xhosa heartland, nine participants were hospitalised with assorted knife and gunshot wounds.

The Government is aware of these problems, and in an effort to help get things right ‘Project Consolidate’ has been launched to support municipalities with technical and financial assistance. Whether this will achieve much remains to be seen. After all, if you are the local bigwig, why should you have to listen to anyone? In fairness, though, many of these municipalities are amalgamations of much smaller ones with consequent problems arising over greatly expanded areas of responsibility while simultaneously trying to deal with an influx of impoverished country folk looking for a better life but often jobless and unable to pay for basic services. The problem has not been helped by the exodus of mainly White professional and technical staff who might have kept things going.

The real time-bomb for this country is financial. At present, the Rand is at less than 12 to the pound, which, of course, has been unsettled by nearly thirteen years of Brownite fiscal nonsense and a full-blown sub-prime mortgage crisis. In South Africa, the problem is not mortgages, or bonds as they are called here, but the explosion of debt in the public sector, whether in state organisations, or in the Provinces or Municipalities. Eskom, the nation’s electrical power supplier, alone needs 1385 billion Rands (or 32 billion pounds) simply to catch up with its maintenance schedules and build the long overdue power stations with their associated networks. The relatively high Rand is because of a surplus of incoming foreign investment in 2009 (compared with capital exports) amounting to some R20 billion. This could easily reverse itself if, or when, overseas investors become more aware of the gaping holes in the country’s financial fabric.

It is not as if our local press played down these difficulties. Ms Ferial Haffajee, former editor of the excellent Mail and Guardian, and now editor of City Press, is not too optimistic. In a recent article she pointed out that even the government had admitted that some R28 billion a year could be saved from ‘frills, fripperies and theft by the state’s employees’. This revelation in a policy budget statement went unnoticed. This corresponds to about two and a quarter billion pounds. In truth, corruption seems in danger of becoming institutionalised as a way of life and, in effect, the criminalisation of the state. She concluded her article by observing: ‘The good news, I suppose, is that government knows the problem. The bad news is that with the syndicates so entrenched and the civil service so graft-prone, there will be precious little that government can do about it or wants to do about it since the rot is firmly entrenched’. She points out that the
civil servants were quick to cotton on to the usefulness of the state tender system as a means of extracting money for personal gain: the system is ‘seriously corrupted’, she thinks, and needs to be reformed.

However, there may be an even greater menace to the body politic. The South African Constitution, worked out in such fine detail, and with great attention paid to tried and tested principles such as the separation of powers, is already under serious threat. This was made all too clear when the interim President between Mbeki and Zuma, one Kgalema Motlanthe, effectively dismissed the national director of public prosecutions to avert any possibility that Zuma might have to appear in court before the elections last year to answer 385 charges. The subsequent appointment to this position of Menzi Simelane was widely regarded with outraged incredulity. He has been the object of fairly top-level scorn, was on nobody’s short-list for the job, and his capacity to act independently of the ANC is considered doubtful. His appointment is being challenged in the courts by the Democratic Alliance, the official parliamentary opposition led by the formidable Helen Zille who has stated publicly that he was only appointed to ensure that the case against Zuma was not re-opened.

In the long-standing soap-style prosecution of the former national police chief, Jackie Selebi, a key prosecution witness may be prevented from giving evidence by the head of the nation’s security services, presumably at the behest of the ANC who may not be anxious for any further disclosures to be made in court about Mbeki’s police chief. Selebi was Africa’s first head of Interpol until his involvement with an internationally known drug trafficker became clear. Selebi, it was claimed in court, had even passed on an Interpol report to warn the trafficker of the Bill’s interest in his activities. It is clear that the ANC, a political party, and not the government, sees its interests as paramount and above those of the country as a whole. As the Farmer’s Weekly observed ‘…once the authority of the courts is eroded, the jackboot and the cudgel are quick to follow.’ Martin Welz, editor of Noseweek, which is an invaluable source of information which the great and good would prefer to have kept quiet, and who was no friend at all of the old apartheid regime, said earlier this year: ‘You don’t, of course, have to be in the law to know what a mess the legal system is in …. Old timers will tell you that it wasn’t like this in the old days. They conveniently overlook the fact that in the old days the legal system was seriously tainted and discredited by the political system within which it operated. But, even in those days, the legal system had some semblance of legitimacy.’

But not all is so unamusing. Early last year the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department went on strike because some of its members had been recorded on cell-phones soliciting bribes from errant motorists and, accordingly, sacked. The Metrocops thought this was very unfair, as a good slice of the bribe money they used to extort seems to have been made over to their boss, one Charles Ngcobo, who is not a policeman by background but an ANC stooge under investigation for having some R7 million (about 580,000 pounds) in his bank account, which seems rather a lot for an honest copper. So the Metrocops went on a bit of a rampage in downtown Jo’burg. Who fired the first shot is not clear, but soon they and the South African Police Service were exchanging fire amidst the city-centre traffic jam. Incredibly, no one seems to have been killed or even seriously injured, though whether this was due to poor training or professional etiquette remains unclear. A couple of months later some of the Metrocops arrested during this fracas had their day in court when, incredibly, the Metrocops’ headquarters was closed for the day so that their colleagues could enjoy the opportunity to demonstrate on their behalf outside the court. Sub-Saharan Africa can sometimes appear to veer between the frightening and the farcical. In this case, the Police achieved both at once.

I have not mentioned the bizarre figure of Julius Malema, head of the ANC’s Youth League, many of whose supporters apparently believe Robert Mugabe is a bigger hero than Nelson Mandela, nor discussed the man-made tragedy of Zimbabwe, and South Africa’s less than heroic role in her story. In 2009 the number of farmers murdered in South Africa, nearly all White, exceeded the number of British soldiers who lost their lives in Afghanistan. Even in South Africa, this barely believable fact is hardly remarked on. Even for the month of July the murders came to seventy-two and, according to official statistics don’t want to know and many farm attacks go unreported to the police because it is often felt to be a fruitless exercise.

Is President Zuma a fit person for the job? Nine months since his inauguration, we still don’t know. Is he planning to govern South Africa for the common good, or is he more concerned with preserving a façade of unity over an visibly disintegrating ANC, or, as University of Cape Town law professor Pierre de Vos put it, is he ‘a gangster hell-bent on protecting himself and his cronies’? The appointment of Menzi Simelane would suggest the last of these.

Hugh Farquharson has spent half his life in South Africa as an economist
Put that Light Out!

Dan Lewis

Of all the challenges an incoming Conservative government faces, energy is almost certainly the toughest. In the next Parliamentary term, Britain faces a wholly unprecedented period of rising energy import dependency, staggeringly high energy infrastructure investment, an emerging energy gap, inherited and unreachable renewable and carbon reduction targets — which it has subscribed to, at least in public — and a Tory party membership which is all too irritatingly aware of the weather not always following the climate change script.

To prevent this catastrophe, David Cameron early on in his first term must confront the EU, secure big energy infrastructure investments and dump a lot of expensive programmes and quangos that either we can no longer afford or just don’t do anything useful. The costs of those energy shortages going ahead under his premiership are awesome, both politically and economically, and as bad as a sovereign debt default.

The financial circumstances make his brief particularly challenging. Even if credit were cheap and widely available, the height of the investment mountain is staggering. Depending on whom you find credible and which scenario you find plausible, somewhere between £150 and £250 billion will have to be found by 2020 by the utilities and the National Grid to invest in new renewables, smart grids and meters, a nuclear replacement programme and the associated balance of systems at the grid and distribution network level. The money is not there.

National Grid Plc, the regulated monopoly that owns and operates the high voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales as well as the gas transmission network, has a net debt position of £22 billion. The idea that they can borrow ad infinitum on the international debt markets at eye-wateringly high prices without their investors demanding they cut investment and repair their balance sheet or instead focus their investment on the more lucrative USA is laughable.

Then there are the utility companies, Britain’s big six Distribution Network Operators — those who sell us consumers electricity and gas: EDF Energy, RWE, EON, Scottish Power, Scottish and Southern Energy and Centrica. Thanks to their own pre-credit crunch investment boom and the recession decimating cash flow, their balance sheets have taken a big haircut too. Amongst the worst are EDF Energy which has a net debt position of £31.5bn and EON’s, which is close to £40 billion. According to a leading city utility analyst, Nigel Hawkins, put together the deteriorating finances of these major players pose a real threat to the government’s cherished electricity aims and maintaining security of supply.

And whilst no one is ready to admit it this side of the election, the Conservatives — or maybe who knows? Labour and the Lib Dems — will be well-justified in back-tracking after the event, if, as many predict, the recovery is weak and public sentiment is, at best, unhappy with the rising energy prices that these policies will entail.

In the meantime, Conservative opposition to the Infrastructure Planning Commission has not gone down well with those who would deliver it. Investors still need assurance on whether they can build energy infrastructure without the crippling costs that planning delays consistently produce. Britain has long been ill-served by a bizarre anti-infrastructure cult, which the Conservatives tap into at their peril.

Meanwhile, the Conservative emphasis on offshore wind — which costs double that of onshore — and marine energy which is barely out of R&D and still prohibitively expensive is not a feasible solution. Two years ago I got some stick for being (quite correctly) quoted in the Guardian as decrying the Government’s 2020 targets on offshore wind, supposedly providing one-fifth of the UK’s electricity by that date:

The government is deluding itself on a grand scale. There will be no race by investors to build offshore wind farms — the returns are just not high enough and there are supply-chain constraints in installation vessel capability and insufficient turbines.

Since then nothing has changed except that the technical difficulties have increased, the ongoing credit crunch has raised the cost of capital and, thanks to successful lobbying, the level of subsidy afforded to offshore wind is now double that of onshore wind, making it even more expensive to the unwilling consumer.

And then there’s the so-called ‘smart grid’. Apparently, it’s a great idea to spend up to £13.5bn up to 2020 (according to Ernst & Young estimates) on installing 47 million smart meters across the country to keep very precise tabs on how much energy we are
all using in real time so that we can all receive hyper-accurate billing and measure how much electricity we export to the grid from micro wind turbines and solar panels. At current exchange rates, £13.5 billion buys you 6-7 big new nuclear reactors. I know what I’d rather have.

The Conservative emphasis on energy efficiency is misguided and naive. They propose to offer every household a Green Deal: the right to have up to £6,500 worth of home insulation improvements, enabling households to reduce their energy bills, with the costs being met from the much greater savings that arise. The likes of Centrica are already salivating at the prospect of this work. But whilst this may enhance capital efficiency, the energy saved will rebound in the money supply as an additional energy input. The truth is that energy efficiency always ultimately increases, not reduces, demand for energy.

William Stanley Jevons pointed this out in his 1865 book, *The Coal Question*:

> It is a confusion of ideas to suppose that the economical use of fuel is equivalent to diminished consumption. The very contrary is the truth.

It has since become known as the Jevons Paradox (that technological progress that increases the efficiency with which a resource is used, tends to increase — rather than decrease — the rate of consumption of that resource). Energy efficiency should be understood as the number of dollars produced per barrel of oil equivalent input. To that end, those figures nation by nation are reproduced here:

**Table 1: UK Energy Efficiency relative to the Rest of the World**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Dollars of output per Barrel of Oil Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>1,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>1,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>819</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrary to received opinion, the UK is a highly energy efficient country with a world ranking of seven based on these 2005 figures from the International Energy Agency.

As per the Jevons Paradox, ultimately progress always increases energy demand. For whatever Britons save on energy at the micro level, the money rebounds as an additional energy input increasing overall demand at the macro level.

It’s not that British consumers won’t cut their personal energy bills and save money — they will. The real issues are:

1. What will they then do with the money they have saved which will rebound as an additional energy input?
2. Would not this money be better spent on achieving a clean and secure energy supply in the first place, for a fraction of the cost and at no environmental impact?

Once the economy picks up, energy consumption is going to keep on rising in the UK. If you don’t believe me now, just look at the historical data and keep tabs going forward on total energy demand, electricity demand, population growth and crucially, imports from less energy efficient countries to whom we have unknowingly exported our energy demand.

Unfortunately, there are still plenty of otiose people — and vested interests — who dismiss the Jevons paradox, or the rebound effect, because Jevons was a Malthusian, or angrily say that the paradox has been disproved without showing any evidence for it. I’ve had my fair share of green ink emails and comments along these lines. And whilst it’s true that he was a follower of Malthus (who I agree was wrong), it’s also irrelevant because facts are independent of those — and the other views of — those who espouse them. I don’t disagree with communists who think murder is wrong. Are they trying to suggest that we consume less energy per capita in the 2010s than we did in the 1870s?

One day, I hope, the penny will drop on the futility of energy efficiency, and William Stanley Jevons will get the credit. For as he said in the same book:

> The reduction of the consumption of coal, per ton of iron, to less than one third of its former amount, was followed, in Scotland, by a ten fold increase in total consumption, between the years 1830 and 1863, not to speak of the indirect effect of cheap iron in accelerating other coal-consuming branches of industry.

To a great extent, Conservative energy policy will be shielded by past failures. They will not be the first Energy Team to have ambition far ahead of available resources, and those aims will soon be quietly abandoned, as many of those of the Quality of Life Policy Group’s recommendations already have from late 2007. We all know that the 10 per cent renewables aim was not achieved by 2010 and no one seriously believes that 34 per cent of electricity will be renewable.
by 2020. But who now remembers the target of 10 per cent renewables by 2000 and the infinite number of energy efficiency drives over the decades?

The real challenge will be to roll back expectations, introduce a new priority of energy security and above all, provide for an investment framework, which delivers the capital and new plant required. While David Cameron would prefer that Europe won’t figure in the political landscape over the next few years, in energy policy it will with a vengeance. To be sure of keeping the lights on after 2015, Britain will have to renegotiate an extended opt-out from the EU’s Large Combustion Plant Directive, to keep the coal stations open and renegotiate the 2020 renewables target in line with technical and financial realities. For the Tories, the easy bit here is that they can blame the outgoing administration for many of our energy woes. For they will be all too fully aware that the voters will be quick to blame them in the face of gas shortages and blackouts.

Britain’s policy-making establishment must realise that the country needs more energy, not less, and that the long-term solution is to promote the expansion of clean and secure energy whose input has no negative environmental or foreign policy impact. Britain needs to refocus on big impact, long lifespan, clean and secure technologies like large hydro, nuclear, cross-sea interconnectors and securing additional gas pipelines and storage. There’s plenty of scope for expansion. Norway could easily double its massive hydropower resources again and export most of the increase to Britain — probably the cheapest way of increasing quality renewables for the UK.

A nuclear replacement programme should be happening, but the cash-poor utilities aren’t ready to pay for the upfront capital-expenditure costs unless they can have a guaranteed market for the next 40 years. In the face of energy-security threats, this ought to be worth it. A much bigger long-term vision would require all of Europe’s electricity markets to combine, deepening the liquidity and lowering prices.

Finally, nearly 20 years after the Single Market, it’s ridiculous that only Spain, Sweden and the UK have unbundled their gas and electricity markets, thus ending vertical integration and its related monopoly abuse. We now have absurd situations where in times of high demand, continental gas suppliers can draw on Britain’s meagre gas-storage reserves, but British suppliers can’t use continental facilities. That’s why the UK’s gas-storage facilities are much less safe than official figures would suggest. For Britain, rising energy demand and relative decline are both here to stay. A fundamental rethink is required that faces up to reality, not to some Green Utopia. Pricing energy security into the equation ahead of reducing carbon is an unavoidable necessity. The longer it is left, the harder it will get.

Dan Lewis is Chief Executive of the Economic Policy Centre

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On a showery morning in north Wales children from the village of Plas Bellin, dressed as characters from *Alice In Wonderland*, disappear into the local woods. Fuelled with biscuits they explore part of the woodland which has been turned into an outdoor ‘art gallery’, displaying their paintings. Before they return to the village they pin their wishes on to a tree. They spend the afternoon enjoying a bouncy castle, face-painting and a barbecue. It could be a scene from an expensive summer camp, but these children are among the poorest and most vulnerable in the country and if their parents had not found a refuge in Plas Bellin they would now be in care, perhaps lost to their parents for good.

In 1983 Edna Speed, a headmistress from Chester, set up a charity called ‘Save the Family’, to try to keep homeless families together. In 1985 she rented a derelict house and outbuildings in ten and a half acres of land from the Coal Board for £3,250 a year. By hard graft and charity it became Plas Bellin, a beautiful village where 24 homeless families can stay until they can face the world again. Edna’s principle has always been that families should stay together. At Plas Bellin homeless people, many with drug and alcohol problems, learn how to care for their children and themselves, in a comfortable, safe environment. ‘We don’t do grotty B & Bs’, says Edna. ‘We create a comfortable high standard home and make people feel that they really matter.’

The main house off a courtyard is a large oak-beamed cottage where homeless families go when they first arrive, each provided with en suite bedrooms and a separate kitchen. The front room with soft cushions and large TV is extremely comfortable, but it can’t quite sooth the unease of someone like Joanne O’Loughlin, 30, a pretty blonde with a very anxious smile. She is there with her daughters Mollie, 10 and Rachel, 6. ‘When I came here I was dead naughty,’ said Mollie. ‘She was nuts,’ said Joanne. ‘The boys at school picked on me all the time and I didn’t go to school much,’ Mollie told me. ‘I was always crying to stop at home.’

Until a few months ago they lived on a rough council estate in Birkenhead where Joanne barricaded herself in because she was so afraid of violent attacks from her neighbours. The girls stayed with their grandparents most of the time but when they both died within a short time, Joanne tried to hang herself. She increased her drug use, neglected the girls, her house was used by dealers and she was evicted. ‘My children were due to go into care,’ she says, ‘but a social worker suggested coming here and somehow I got picked. I was considered very needy and this place does a lot for you.’

At Plas Bellin she has completed a drug rehabilitation programme, improved her literacy and gained certificates in health care. She has also gained a placement in a local dog rescue centre – her first ever job.

Mollie has been offered her first experience of music and drama. ‘I like singing and dancing and I’ve got lots of friends here,’ she says. Apparently she is famous for her impression of Lady Gaga singing ‘Poker Face’.

Crossing the courtyard to the Children’s Centre, where there is a nursery, homework and craft rooms, I met Gemma Allan, 26, her partner Aaron Ford, 22 and their children, Lily, eight months, Alec, 2 and Ashley, 7. They look like a very happy family group, enjoying plates of pasta, but just as Alec was born they were evicted because of debt, mainly due to Aaron’s drug use and Gemma’s drinking.

Gemma grew up in hostels with her mother, escaping from a violent father. ‘I grew up a very angry person,’ she says. ‘I drank from the age of 14.’ ‘We were two bad people together,’ says Aaron. ‘I couldn’t get up in the morning, even to go and get my benefits.’

Their family would have been broken up if they hadn’t reached Plas Bellin. ‘This place saved our children,’ he says, ‘and it saved us.’

Edna, a Welsh Baptist, doesn’t let anyone off lightly. Her village offers people security and trains them to meet the outside world again. ‘I used to sleep till 4pm,’ said Edna. ‘But after twelve months here, I had to change my ways. They would fight me, they were continually saying, ‘go on, you can do it, you are great.’

‘I used to bang on his door at 8am,’ said Eileen Waring, who looks after eight families in the centre. ‘Then I’d go back and check on him. I did that just as if he was my own son, and I am very proud of him now.’ ‘I hated her at first,’ says Aaron. ‘I was happy in my own little world and I saw all offers of help as an insult or an attack. I didn’t trust anyone. I got over that...
while I was here.’

Gemma spent her time getting off drink, attended confidence building courses and learning to cook. Residents can enter cookery competitions, learn sugar craft, baking, jam and chutney making, carpentry and basic budgeting. Residents grow their own vegetables, use their own orchards and sell the produce at local fairs. Their jam is also available on line. In all this industry, the idea of providing fun for the children is never forgotten. They all get at least a glimpse of a precious normal childhood.

‘We’ve been to the beach,’ Ashley told me. ‘A fun-fair, Chester zoo, the mountains, and we’ve seen a firework display.’ He is hoping to join a sponsored walk up Mount Snowdon to help raise funds.

The village is funded partly by housing benefit and by a supported housing grant from the government but £400,000 a year comes from charity. A recent grant from the Children In Need Appeal helps them to bring re-settled children back at weekends so that they can keep up their friendships and links with other families. Tim McLachlan, chief executive of the charity, reckons they are highly cost effective. He points out that it costs the state £50,000 to keep one child in care for a year, while it costs Save the Family only £30,000 to look after a whole family. They have a high success rate at helping people to fend for themselves instead of claiming benefits or getting into debt. 81 per cent of their families do not become homeless again. But their chief success is keeping children out of the care system, which fails so many children and often leads on to a life of poverty, drug abuse and criminality. At Plas Bellin people who have often had little or nothing in their lives get a glimpse of how good life can be. It doesn’t look like a hostel, there are even flagpoles around the main courtyard ready to hold Christmas trees. Everything is done to make the place a proper home.

Brian and Hayley McHugh, their children, Ryan, 12, Courtney, 9, and Natasha, 7, live in a four bedroomed cottage on ‘dream square’, so called because a child said that living there ‘was like a dream’, because she felt safe with her family for the first time. The couples’ harsh experiences outside are etched into their faces. Brian, a qualified football coach, once worked as a tour guide for a small company in Chester. When it went bankrupt he fell behind with his rent and ended up homeless. Their oldest daughter had just died of leukaemia and Ryan became disturbed by the chaos.

They moved in with Hayley’s mother but she died a year later and the couple took to drink. They almost lost the children until Edna offered them a home. In the village Hayley has learned to cook nutritious meals and has been accepted on a college childcare course. Brian has become more involved with youth work and hopes to become a professional coach again. Ryan has discovered that he likes drama and he has become an official mascot for Wrexham football team, after Edna recommended him. When I saw him in the morning, he was dressed as Tweedle Dee, busily pinning his wishes to a tree in the forest. He says his wish is to ‘play for Manchester United’, and apparently they have got their eye on him for their junior team.

Families stay at Plas Bellin on average for five and a half months, but they can remain longer and always go back if they need to. They then get the chance to rent a smaller house from the charity for as long as they need. As the charity has so many requests for help they are planning to open another centre at Cotton Hall Farm, near Chester, to take in 30 more families. They have raised £750,000 already but they will need to find £1.7m by February 2010 to be able to afford the lease. Anyone who makes a substantial donation will have a house in the new village named after them.

Jane Kelly was a staff writer on the Daily Mail.

To donate toys to the children of Plas Bellin and for information contact: www.savethefamily.co.uk.
To support the Cotton Hall Farm project tel: 01244 409100.
An Airhead from Alaska?

Paul Gottfried

Since the distribution of Sarah Palin’s ghost-written life story *Going Rogue* in November 2009, this former Alaska governor has seen her celebrity soar. Her book sold over 600,000 copies within thirty-six hours of going on sale. And even her liberal media critic Oprah Winfrey worked hard to have the subject of *Going Rogue* put on her programmes. FOX-news went agog over this 320-page work, and for a week, Sarah’s face was more visible on FOX than that of any of the channel’s usual GOP boosters.

For the passionately leftist *Newsweek*, Sarah remains a ‘problem’, indeed enough of one to justify a feature story about her during the third week in November. Despite her apparent lack of sophistication and the series of verbal gaffes she committed while the running mate of the unsuccessful presidential candidate John McCain, Sarah remains an overwhelmingly popular figure with tens of millions of Americans. She is the preferred presidential candidate among registered Republicans for 2012; and her favourable rating among self-described American conservatives has soared to above 80 percent.

The only influential people on the establishment right who express reservations about her are the neoconservative journalists David Frum and Charles Krauthammer, although even here exceptions can be found. Bill Kristol and his fortnightly *Weekly Standard* are high on Sarah, a fact that may be partly attributable to her Christian Zionism and her outspoken defence of Israeli settlements on the West Bank. And Krauthammer has moderated his critical attitude by observing repeatedly on FOX that Sarah ‘will be a significant force in Republican politics, even if she never becomes President’.

Sarah’s prominence on the American right might seem to some to be disproportionate to what she has shown in terms of verbal facility or knowledge about current events. It is hard to consider her a serious presidential candidate as soon as one thinks about how often she has put her foot in her mouth — after McCain, or his campaign manager, plucked her out of Alaskan obscurity, in order to supply a sinking presidential candidate with an unlikely running mate. Her embarrassing performance during an interview with Katie Couric, when she displayed a woeful ignorance of foreign affairs, was not a leftist ambush but a shocking revelation.

Whether it was useful to have her in that interview or exposed to other similar contretemps is a secondary question. What this exposure revealed was what the McCain campaign tried to hide: how little Sarah knew outside the nitty-gritty of Alaska political life. The lady also had a way of punctuating her vaguely stated points with such folksy phrases as ‘ya betcha’, a practice that became even more painful for some of us to listen to, considering that what she said was mostly an exercise in self-validation or a string of GOP campaign cliché.

Despite the obvious but enigmatic hatred that she generates on the American left, Sarah is certainly not a hard right-winger. She approves of anti-discrimination laws and directives that are intended to help women, and she attributes her success as a high school basketball star to anti-discrimination measures imposed at the state and federal levels. She was also indignant over Senator Harry Reid’s remarks about President Obama’s appeal as a nice black person. Or so she said during an interview that she granted Bill O’Reilly on January 11. The interviewee was shocked that Reid would have pointed out the president’s nonwhite pigmentation, in discussing his electoral strengths in what was described as a private conversation. At the very least, Sarah insisted, the offending Reid should be removed as Senate Majority Speaker.

Sarah has never been known to take a strong stand on immigration although, since the appearance of her book, she has expressed reservations about ‘illegals’ crossing the American border. But as Peter Brimelow has observed on VDARE, it is hard to figure out the logic of this stand. Sarah is supposedly taking her position against illegal entrance into the US in order to help out governors in border-states who are wrestling with a flood of illegals. Indeed most of these governors, according to Brimelow, have done pitifully little to address this issue. Some have turned a blind eye to it, for fear of losing their Hispanic voting base. Moreover, to whatever extent Sarah has spoken out on foreign affairs, she seems to have taken her opinions from a ‘conservative’ foreign policy, she has never moved beyond a few clumsily framed neoconservative tags.

On the positive side, she opposes abortion, and even gave birth to a child that she knew had Downs Syndrome. She poses for pictures with a rifle and backs the National Rifle Association; the sight of this earthy mother of four, holding a hunting rifle while dressed in outdoor attire, sends tremors of excitement through...
her middle-aged male devotees. Less clear, however, is that her package of stands amounts to anything more remarkable than centre-right Republicanism overlaid with neoconservative sentence fragments.

Despite arguments that she is not a serious right-winger, Sarah has a crazed following on the right which is composed largely of middle-aged and older American conservatives who adore Sarah for two reasons. One, she strikes her admirers as one helluva gal, a woman who presents herself in a manner that her male votaries associate with the eternal feminine, that is female folksiness. A calendar with Sarah in hunting gear sold enormously well after last year’s election, and from all accounts, the calendar’s primary buyers were older Republican men.

Two, and even more importantly, Sarah taps a populist vein, which is peculiarly American in its aesthetic, cultural and social egalitarianism. Unlike its European bourgeois counterpart, typified by a movement such as the Lega Nord, American populism equates corniness with anti-elitism. Sarah’s speaking habits and even her lack of readiness to deal with complicated policy questions actually endear her to her followers. Such traits indicate her down-home upbringing.

Further, her undistinguished education at a community college and at the University of Idaho renders her more attractive to those who are already inclined to like her. It shows a lack of the kind of snobbery that is identified with the bearers of Princeton or Harvard degrees. A New York Post commentary by Michael Goodwin (25 November, 2009) contrasts Obama’s ‘Ivy League eloquence’ with the true conservative openness of Sarah Palin. Obama’s careful diction ‘now seems tired next to her wrong-side-of-the-track passion’. Obama’s rhetorical style shows that he ‘has aligned himself with the left wing of his party instead of the ordinary people who identify with Sarah.’

If the American Left stresses victimhood, managerial control, and Political Correctness, then the American populist Right exalts PLAINNESS. In a campaign speech that I heard then Republican governor Lee Dreyfuss give in Madison, Wisconsin in 1980, the speaker electrified the crowd by proclaiming: ‘We’re all descended from the scum and refuse of the Old World.’ As Dreyfuss finished this sentence, the ecstatic lady sitting next to me noted exultantly: ‘That was really rightwing!’ That, by the way, was the last time I attended a Republican rally, as a party member or even as an outsider.

 Needless to say the American Right in the twentieth century was not consistently egalitarian. Among its luminaries were such anti-egalitarians as H L Mencken, Albert Nock, the young W F Buckley, and Russell Kirk who wrote The Conservative Mind. And if there were vulgar and not particularly cerebral politicians whom rightists once defended, they argued that these public figures represented solid principles and so we could excuse their bad manners, plebeian ways, or verbal awkwardness. Rarely on the right during the post-war years were cultural mediocrity and educational limits considered positive qualities in someone we hoped to see lead our movement and the country. No one celebrated Joe McCarthy as a hard, profane drinker who wore baggy clothes. Some conservatives considered themselves to be McCarthyites despite the social failings of the man whom they rightly or wrongly believed was saving us from Communist agents. In Sarah’s case, the opposite may be true. It is not her substance or articulation of principles but her lack of sophistication that appeals to the current American Right.

This Right went ballistic when Obama followed court etiquette and bowed before the Japanese imperial couple. An outcry was heard over the ‘undemocratic’ manner in which the American president approached Japanese royalty. The rightwing columnist Michelle Malkin produced two syndicated columns excoriating Obama for his ‘spinelessness’ at the Japanese court. Neoconservative criticism by contrast was more restrained. It stressed the contrast between the overly informal behaviour toward the British queen shown by Barack and Michelle Obama and the president’s obeisance to the Japanese Emperor and Empress. Obama had supposedly slighted our ‘special relation’ with the British, the nation that previewed our now perfected form of democracy.

But however programmed and predictable was this response, the outcry against any concession to monarchy seemed even more ludicrous. It reflected the plebeian sentiment of those who despise gourmet food, fine art and polished syntax and who slobber over Sarah Palin.

In this celebrity they have found exactly what they value, without the complicating question of what is philosophically ‘conservative’. When Sarah’s teenage daughter got pregnant by a very ordinary jock, who has since deserted his wife by shotgun marriage and his baby daughter, Sarah’s fans applauded her loyalty to a daughter in trouble. Supposedly it was impertinent and even leftist to ask how her daughter got into this mess in the first place. Where were her parents when she became involved with someone who sounded like a thug, and someone whom Sarah later had dragged to the GOP convention to sit with her family? Although this tasteless melodrama should have disturbed Sarah’s fans, it clearly did not. She was then showered with the same indulgence when she unexpectedly resigned her post as Alaska governor.
After all, ordinary people have to face daily problems, and what are Sarah and her weirdly named children but the quintessence of the Ordinary, raised to a Platonic Ideal? The Palins are the human equivalent of McDonalds, Burger King, and Kmart, all business establishments that Sarah’s followers are likely to frequent as self-identifying acts.

After the Second World War, the authoritarian conservative jurist Carl Schmitt advised his acquaintance Francisco Franco to restore a Spanish monarchy, even if he had to take the crown for himself. According to Schmitt, Latin peoples could only accord legitimacy to a government if it came with the pomp of monarchical institutions. Whether this observation was true, certainly the American Right celebrates Sarah Palin for instantiating their political and social ideals. At least for the current American populist Right, ordinariness and garbled phrases confer legitimacy on would-be leaders.

Paul Gottfried’s autobiography was reviewed by Grant Havers (SR Vol 28 No 1).

A Mean Test
Patricia Morgan

Shadow Chancellor George Osborne has joined the chorus of tut-tutting at means-tested child tax credits going to ‘better-off’ families. Anyone who believes that this is a perversion of the wisdom of means testing, does not know about the mechanics of ‘targeted’ welfare.

Osborne and others seem to miss that, because of their ‘neediness’, welfare ‘clients’ will be on a plethora of ‘targeted’ benefits — to pay their rent, council tax, etc, as well as getting a whole range of free goods and services. Anything ‘targeted’ has, by definition, to be withdrawn if and when people are deemed non-needy. Do this suddenly and there is the loss of a hundred or more per cent of any extra income above the cut off point for entitlement; more if taxes are being imposed at the same time. This problem of the Marginal Tax Rate which makes people better off staying in need has bedevilled benefit engineers. The only way to cope is by phasing out or ‘tapering’ benefits gradually — and the more that is ‘targeted’ the more that has to be withdrawn and the further the taper has to extend up the income scale. Even so, the effect on MTRs is still minimal over crucial reaches of the income distribution, with claimants facing losses of 96 per cent.

If Osborne stops credits suddenly at lower income levels he will find many more people will see nothing or have a negative income if they try to improve their fortunes. If, as Cameron promises, people will be allowed to keep a large slice of their out of work benefits when they get a job, this will mean a further big phase out at a higher point on the income scale. Another way to avoid tapers extending to ‘better off’ levels is to drastically reduce the value of tax credits and other means-tested benefits or — stop targeting needies.

It is because so much has been targeted that the ‘rich’ now get crumbs from the benefit fest. After ten years, New Labour had handed out around 50 per cent more welfare to around 30 million people via a maze of around forty benefits and tax credits, despite record economic growth and rising job levels. It was to ‘build a fair and inclusive society which promotes opportunity and independence for all’ and eliminate child poverty.

High on the radar were the lone parents making up an increasing proportion of low-income families; although nobody likes to recognise that family fragmentation accounts for a large slice of growing inequality. By 2004, lone parents received payments more than five times larger than those going to couple families.

Harriet Harman must have been pleased at how the introduction of tax credits increased the divorce rate by 160 per cent for two-parent families at the lowest income levels. Mothers were suddenly worth so much more on their own that, if they were young and uneducated, far from rushing into work, they preferred to contribute a baby to the extra 45,000 produced in the first year of the benefit bonanza which handed them a rise of 45 per cent. Can’t make one, then buy one? Britain became one of the top destinations for the 21st century slave trade, with children as young as three months trafficked by gangsters who sell them on to benefit cheats. This unprecedented expenditure has not abolished child poverty. As single parents and their children increased, families with two working parents have found it harder to improve their fortunes.

Thomas Malthus thought that poor relief depleted resources by allowing people to breed early with little prospect of being able to support a family. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries rural parishes often gave allowances to labourers, beginning with the third child,
pushing their birth rate up by 25 per cent. Making up earnings allowed employers to put their wages bill on the rates and employees shied away from self-help lest they lose their subsidies. As taxation grew to support the burgeoning poor, the pauper and the ratepayer threatened to overlap. In our time, millions of people taxed below the poverty line receive wage and child ‘credits’ to make up the deficit.

During the 1930’s recession unemployed fathers found it unworthwhile to work and the ‘household means test’ drove families to conceal their members. Outside ministerial or politically correct circles, everybody knows that people maintain or declare separate residences to maximise benefits and housing; ‘strategic single parenthood’ accounts for over a quarter of (identified) benefit overpayment. The numbers dependent upon out of work benefits are the same (5.4m) as ten years ago and one child in five still lives in a household where nobody works.

A third of benefit fraud affects disability living allowance (DLA) where, mirroring the growth in welfare dependent mothers in social tenancies, there is an immense rise in working age men not only living alone, but unemployed or economically inactive. These men might otherwise have a valued role supporting families which would give them the incentive to get out of bed and protect, rather than despoil, their neighbourhoods. Next to the highest rate of working age disability in the developed world, are the 16 to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training who are set to reach their greatest numbers since records began.

Means testing was emphatically rejected in the 1830’s and 1940’s for encouraging the very behaviour it aimed to relieve. It survived in the 19th century only in the form of subsistence provided under ‘less eligible’ (below minimum wage) conditions to discourage dependence. Beveridge, the architect of the post-war welfare state, supported a low-slung safety net for the small minority who fell through his system of contributory benefits. Essentially an extension of working class social insurance measures, they embodied a mutualist model of society in which measures that had been tried and rejected for their disastrous tendencies to reward bad behaviour returned with the acceptance of that collectivism which saw people as passive victims of ‘forces’ that only the wise controllers might manage. William Beveridge’s warning could be ignored: ‘If money is paid on any condition, it tends to bring that condition about; if it is paid or given on degrading conditions, sooner or later it degrades.’ Reaching its apogee with New Labour, Tory Governments assembled the tangled mess that New Labour would nurture into its surreal hydra of redistributive welfare. An unemployment trap emerged in the 1970s where the low paid found it increasingly unworthwhile to work — particularly since the tax burden was moving on to families and out-of-work benefits were rising. The answer was what has become the familiar ‘benefit to get out of benefits’. As each additional move to ‘target’ the ‘needy’ accumulated over the 1980s/90s, nobody really wanted to know how each one interacted with the others, even when imposed to counteract the disincentives of the one that went before. Nobody looked at the dynamic consequences and, putting two and two together, asked why child poverty, welfare dependency, economic inactivity and the welfare bill were all inexorably growing?

Local authorities had to house people with ‘special needs’ first; the more inconsequential the behaviour, the quicker the access. No longer was feckless breeding by the indigent something to frown upon. As working class communities became sink estates dominated by ‘inactive’ claimants, barely a third of working age tenants had full time jobs by 2005 and housing benefit exceeded £5bn.

Outside ministerial or politically correct circles, everybody knows that people maintain or declare separate residences to maximise benefits and housing

Measures that had been tried and rejected for their disastrous tendencies to reward bad behaviour returned with the acceptance of that collectivism which saw people as passive victims of ‘forces’ that only the wise controllers might manage. William Beveridge’s warning could be ignored: ‘If money is paid on any condition, it tends to bring that condition about; if it is paid or given on degrading conditions, sooner or later it degrades.’ Reaching its apogee with New Labour, it seemed that money could overcome any problem. Unacceptable behaviour must be met with more help if it is to be cured, so the worse someone behaves, the more they must be given. In 2006, Haringey Council became aware Baby P’s mother had been torturing him. So they exchanged her council flat for a four-bedroom house.
A system that is based on ‘need’ without reference to desert must, perforce, destroy morality as much as it will bankrupt a country. In Neighbours from Hell, Frank Field suggested that 200 years of progress in building civility in Britain has been unravelled with the advent of welfare rights which have severed the connection between a person’s actions and their consequences. At least people in the past took a century to repeat their mistakes. It is beyond despair to hear not only politicians but even eminent economists suggest that the answer to the mess of means testing is more means testing — or more means testing that ‘targets’ the truly needy. It is claimed that we have been diverted from the true path of pure means testing. This takes us straight back to square one. The myopia of the Thatcher years where each piece of targeting was seen in isolation as a discrete fix for an immediate need, has been matched by New Labour’s assumption that the poor are a finite reservoir or fixed sump. Once emptied, the bucket would not refill.

Since there is not a finite supply of needies, but always a multitude of hopefuls on the margins clamouring to be let in on any provision; altering their circumstances, dumping their assets, and staking their claim to be as or more needy than thou. Tax credits were first given to working families, then non-working families and now childless workers. The predictable effect of putting qualifying conditions on a benefit is to cause migration on to another. Once the youngest child reaches 16, a hefty slice of the lone parent population goes straight on to long term sick benefits. Women have been signing on as sick at three times the rate of men since the late 1990s; the interim measure until the state pension can be drawn. Benefits now account for 30 per cent of government spending. If means testing is so cheap and useful, why is the vast expense of targeting needies drowning us in debt and further social dislocation? Again, the answer, this time from the centre right think tank Reform, is because we are not targeting enough, since undeserving ‘middle class’ people (those on £15,000! plus) are ripping off the system. Emotional appeals by the poverty lobby to help the needy are more than matched by an atavistic spitefulness on the right towards middle class ‘entitlements’. The middle class are benefit dependent and must be to be moved ‘out of the welfare net’ not only because of some tax credits received by some middle class families but also because all parents receive the flat rate, universal Child Benefit. The twisted logic, shared by many like Simon Heffer in the Daily Telegraph, blames the dire social consequences of a ‘targeted’ welfare system on the only remaining recognition for dependents in the tax/benefit system — believing (along with Reform) that, if this is taken away from middle-class people and given to those ‘in need’, it will remove welfare dependency and its ills. Reform itself acknowledges that the top 40 per cent of households with children pay far more in taxation than they receive.

South East Asian countries that have — as we did after the war — universal tax allowances for dependents, a minimal safety net and enforcement of responsibility for family members, also have lower rates of poverty, inequality and household fragmentation, and little welfare expenditure. Nowhere in the world has a means-tested or ‘targeted’ anti-poverty policy been other than counter-productive, as seen with Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs where, having declared a ‘war on poverty’ and a fourfold increase in federal spending between 1968 and 1980, poverty won. The black family had disintegrated and teenage unemployment was up fourfold. Reform holds up New Zealand as a model for successful means testing. New Zealand was ruthless in departing from universal recognition for self and dependents — it even abolished the personal tax allowance. As all help became means tested and special benefits provided a secure income for lone parents, there was a remorseless decline in two parent families and climbing long term and inter-generational benefit dependency. The two-parent family virtually disappeared among Maoris when it was once the norm, and with feral reproduction has come crime, addiction and high levels of domestic violence and child abuse. New Zealand policy makers arrogantly thought that they could extend means testing to education, health and all services to stop the ‘rich’ receiving what should go to the proliferating ranks of the ‘needy’. The venture was abandoned as it became apparent that families would have negative incomes across much of the income distribution; losing far more than they received if their earnings increased.

What people ‘need’ is as long as a piece of string. Better to give them a base on which they can build, so that they can determine how far they want to go.

Patricia Morgan is writing a book about Teenage Pregnancy.
When a government wants to do anything exceptionally stupid or potentially unpopular it concentrates on labelling. Put a touchy-feely label on a piece of radical vandalism, so goes the usual strategy, and the public will swallow the change with enthusiasm. Thus identity cards were to be labelled entitlement cards, and thus the Conservative government when it introduced the Poll Tax called it the community charge. The general public took no notice, and everyone called it the Poll Tax. More recently the Legal Services Commission has talked of introducing competitive tendering for solicitors’ legal aid contracts as ‘Best Value Tendering’ or BVT, although anyone who knows what is happening is aware that quality of service is to be reduced: competitive tendering, designed to put firms out of business, is what it is.

So it should come as no surprise that the government has changed the name of the agency which will be responsible for registering millions of people who have any dealings with children or the elderly. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 set up the Independent Barring Board. Section 81 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 renames the Board as the Independent Safeguarding Authority. (It is a feature of this government’s jumbled approach to legislation that amendments are introduced before the ink is dry on an Act of Parliament and that measures are brought into force piecemeal so that it is impossible for the ordinary person to know what the law is at any particular moment.) Someone realized that a ‘Barring Board’ however supposedly independent would be viewed negatively, but regardless of how the legislation is dressed up, an agency can expect to be unpopular whose role is going to be stifling community activity, making those who volunteer to help with school trips or who take elderly people to church feel like potential criminals and encouraging malicious snooping. Window dressing will not conceal the level of intrusion. What is puzzling is why no one in government seems to have thought this through. Perhaps the obsession with controlling every aspect of community life means that the government no longer cares how it is perceived?

There has been an understandable hesitation in setting up the arrangements for registration with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). Anyone involved in a ‘specified activity’ with children or vulnerable adults ‘frequently or intensively’ must register. The requirement covers a wide range of activities like teacher training, supervision, advice, medical treatment, transportation. ‘Frequently’ is defined as once a week or more and ‘intensively’ as during four or more days in a 30 day period, so a parent who goes in to help out as a classroom assistant, for example, would be required to register. Initially ‘frequently’ was to have been once a month or more, and ‘intensively’ would have been three days in a 30 day period, but the government has had to review the arrangements because of the level of protest. Those involved in what is labelled ‘controlled activity’, such as work in the NHS or further education need registration; so do cleaners, caretakers, shop workers, catering staff, car park attendants and receptionists. It makes no difference whether the person is working for gain or not. Sir Roger Singleton’s report into the proposed scheme questioned whether ‘controlled activity’ should be part of the scheme. Ed Balls responded that his Department and the Department of Health will ‘take this review forward’. People who avoid clarity are frequently taking something ‘forward’.

It will be an offence punishable with imprisonment to employ or use the services of anyone who has been barred by ISA. Despite the consequences of unemployment for someone who has been barred, there are limited grounds of appeal which can only be made on a point of law or any finding of fact. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act specifically rules out any appeal on the grounds that the decision was not appropriate. In addition to criminal convictions, ISA will be able to take allegations that have never been tested in any court into account. Although ISA will have to send details of the information on which they propose to bar the person, there is a real risk that people will be made unemployable as a result of rumour and gossip.

Those who work closely with children have for some time been required to provide enhanced criminal record certificates. There have been a few court cases brought by people who feel they have been unfairly refused a certificate. One such case was the appeal in X v Chief Constable of West Midlands (2004). It concerned a man who had been refused a certificate: the police had disclosed that he had been charged with...
indecent exposure, even though the Crown Prosecution Service had dropped the case when the alleged victim had not only failed to identify him but had picked out someone else. (I have often been concerned during identification procedures that witnesses who say they are fairly sure that they will identify an offender pick out with total confidence someone who could not possibly have been involved.) Mr X had not had the benefit of challenging the accusation in court because the prosecution had very sensibly dropped the case. The civil court of appeal considered that the police had been right to disclose the information on the basis that the offences had probably been committed. Mr X was 44 years old, he was said to be ‘of good character’, he had obtained a social work diploma in about 1990 and had worked as a social worker until July 2002 when he was dismissed by the agency which employed him. The refusal of a certificate probably meant that he could never work again.

We can expect similar decisions from ISA. The guidelines for those making assessments on whether to include a person on the list of barred persons make it clear that they will be deciding on a balance of probabilities. They can consider such questions as an applicant’s ‘thinking, attitudes and beliefs’, the extent to which behaviour was caused by the applicant’s ‘difficulties in managing relationships’, ‘self-management and lifestyle’ which includes such interesting factors as ‘poor emotional arousal management skills’.

What seems to be missing is any balancing of risk against the job the person actually intends to do. While it may be sensible to make some checks on people who will have very intensive contact with very young children, this is already in place with the enhanced criminal record certificates. And then too there is the cost of all this bureaucracy....

I have been working as a solicitor specializing in criminal work for over 25 years. Most of my clients have been under the age of 30. They grow up eventually, though I have often wished I had the secret of hastening the process. Someone — usually a girlfriend, their mother or grandmother — says ‘I am not chasing around visiting you in prison yet again. You have to get yourself sorted out.’ I have often had the experience of meeting them once they have given up drugs or got their drinking under control and found work. I suspect many of them lied on job application forms about whether or not they had previous convictions, and since they are no longer burgling houses and want to live honestly, it is difficult to complain. One of my clients who used to be a most prolific fraudster found a job with a brewery working under-cover in pubs where they suspected that bar staff were stealing from the till. His employers may not have realized it, but he will have served them well. It has been estimated that about a quarter of adult males in the UK have some sort of criminal conviction. If we worry too much about employing such people, we will have even more people living on benefits than we have now. You might not want to put them in charge of a kindergarten, but ISA will cover a wide range of jobs, not all of them involving positions of responsibility.

One of the areas specifically covered is childminding. At present the law requires those minding children under the age of 8 for more than 2 hours a day to register with Ofsted. There was a great deal of publicity when two police officers in Aylesbury were shopped to Ofsted by a neighbour. They had thought they had the ideal arrangement: they were working different shifts and each cared for the other’s child when the other officer was working. They were friends and the arrangement appeared to be working well. There is no suggestion that the children were not happy. Wrong, said the Ofsted inspector, they were breaking the law. Having reciprocal child care counted as minding a child for ‘reward’ and meant that they should register, and since registration could be expected to take three months, this meant that one of the children was abruptly placed in a nursery. No consideration of the children’s well-being or the distress that they would be caused was allowed to affect Ofsted’s decision to send a notice requiring them to cease their arrangement. To be fair, since the public disgust at Ofsted’s behaviour Ed Balls, the Minister for Education, has said that he will be advising Ofsted to behave differently — but he does not appear to have said it very loudly.

Registration for childminders has been with us for some time. The Children Act 1989 requires every local authority to keep a register but there have been very few prosecutions; the Aylesbury police officers were very unlucky. My experience of doing home visits over the years in various housing estates is that people make their own arrangements, and cash changes hands that the Inland Revenue or even sometimes the Benefits Agency knows nothing about. The fear of someone minding a child is often more of being discovered ‘working while signing on’ than of local authority snoops. When I told one of my clients that she was very probably breaking the law, she said of the child’s mother ‘We have decided to be cousins’. In these days of uncertain parentage, who is to know otherwise?

Sir Roger Singleton’s report makes it clear that where a parent chooses the carer the State should not be involved. Where, for example, a club makes arrangements for parents to organize a rota for ferrying children to and from events then registration is required. Once the parents take over, it becomes a
private arrangement. It does not require very much imagination to devise ways of avoiding the scheme. The English way is often not to openly challenge a law but to find ways round it, or to ignore it where it appears ridiculous. Having a certificate from ISA is in any case no guarantee. The local reputation of Mrs So-and-so as a Sunday school teacher is a better guide to whether she is fit to be in charge of a group of children than a certificate issued by people who have never met her.

ISA was devised in the wake of the public outcry after the Soham murders. It seems that when there is a serious crime we always look for someone to blame. But Parliament should have remembered the fiasco of the Dangerous Dogs Act, which seemed like a good idea at the time, after some horrendous incidents of people being injured. The public mood changed abruptly when healthy animals had to be destroyed. That the climate of opinion would change for ISA when millions of people were required to apply for certificates was very predictable — but it seems politicians never learn.

Jan Davies is a solicitor

Letter from Australia
Catholicism, Protestantism, and Tony Abbott
R J Stove

There is nothing like travel to cleanse the doors of perception about one’s native soil. This article was written after weeks spent in Europe last year, during which time the normally calm waters of Australian politics have been ruffled greatly. On 3 December New South Wales acquired its fourth Premier in four years (and its first female Premier ever): the Las Vegas-born Kristina Keneally, who presides over a State Labor Party government so inept — and so widely acknowledged to be so, even or especially by Labor supporters — that it might well be crushingly defeated at the next election (due in 2011) if the Liberal Opposition were not more inept still. Two days before Mrs Keneally’s elevation, Malcolm Turnbull — previously boss of the Australian Republican Movement — was deposed as Australia’s Federal Liberal leader by former Health Minister Tony Abbott, who thus became his party’s fourth leader in two years.

Abbott won by one vote. Unlike Turnbull, who was generally despised rather than hated (as was his predecessor in the Liberal leadership, the bland Brendan Nelson), Abbott inspires not only genuine hate but genuine fear. This fear has nothing to do with his much-advertised scepticism about anthropogenic global warming. Other prominent Federal Liberal parliamentarians, notably Western Australia’s veteran Wilson Tuckey and South Australia’s comparative newcomer Nick Minchin, have been equally sceptical about climate change without attracting comparable invective. Abbott is a marked man for one reason: he is a Roman Catholic, who seems genuine in his faith and who has a clear notion of what Catholic moral teachings are. Any discussion about Abbott involves discussing Australian Catholicism, a topic indispensable to any understanding of Australian politics.

The most obvious difference between the position of Catholics in Australia and that of Catholics in post-1688 England rests on this fact: in Australia, Sir Richard Bourke — New South Wales’s eighth governor — brought about formal Anglican disestablishment in 1831. Bourke, himself Anglican, might have preferred to retain the Church’s privileges, but what was practicable in Tunbridge Wells could not be enforced in the infant colony, which had too few Anglicans to go around, and too many non-Anglicans (Dissenters and Jews as well as Catholics). Accordingly, Bourke declared all religions equal before the law.

Irish migration to Australia, though great, never reached (even after the Famine) the levels of Irish migration to America. Hence, the whole tone of Australian Irish politics nowhere achieved the intensity and radicalism of American Irish politics. Australia had no Molly Maguires, few genuine Fenians, and no sadistic official strike-breaking goon-squads of the kind notorious from nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century American labour struggles. No Ku Klux Klan either. Trade union leaders in Australia, unless they were outright Communists, were somewhat stolid, unglamorous men, usually with an Irish Catholic (occasionally with a Methodist) background even if they had themselves abandoned churchgoing, and with no more impatience for revolution than had the typical German Social Democrat.

In America in 1929, shortly after American public life had been convulsed by the hope or the dread that a Catholic, Alfred E. Smith, would enter the White House, Australia calmly elected its first Catholic Prime
Minister: James Scullin. When the Depression-battered Scullin lost office in a landslide two years later, he lost to yet another Catholic, Joseph Lyons. As the eminent Protestant historian Geoffrey Blainey observed: ‘Between 1929 and 1949 Irish Australians, three of whom were Catholics and one [John Curtin during the Second World War] a lapsed Catholic, held the post of prime minister in every year but two ... perhaps in no other Protestant part of the world had Catholics enjoyed such political success.’ This record of solid administrative experience had a parallel in the Catholic Labour domination of New South Wales’s, Tasmania’s, and Queensland’s legislatures for decades on end. It also prevented Australian Catholics from succumbing to the messianic delusions which made their American co-religionists, in 1960, so naively vulnerable to John F Kennedy and his mendacious propaganda.

No overt legal discrimination against Catholics existed in Australia after the 1830s. Unofficially, Catholics could be employed in some bureaucratic departments, but not others. Until the 1980s they found it more difficult to enter the professions than their per capita numbers would suggest (and this despite the fact that no Australian Catholic hierarch followed the lead of Cardinal Manning by putting an interdict on Catholic attendance at particular colleges). Plenty of Ian-Paisley-style venom against ‘the Whore of Babylon’ found its way into such ultra-Protestant Australian magazines as The Rock, which in the 1950s sold 30,000 copies per issue. Even so and crucially, there was no equivalent of the USA’s anti-Catholic coalition between ultra-Protestantism and the Jewish Left (a coalition which guaranteed that whilst a genuine Catholic in 1960 could never have hoped for the American Presidency, an ersatz-Catholic like JFK brought out the Jewish vote in record numbers).

When Catholic electoral patterns became a live issue in Australia between 1954 and the early 1970s, the warfare occurred overwhelmingly not between Catholics and Protestants, but within Catholicism itself. It sprang from the activities of Australia’s most prominent and gifted twentieth-century layman, B A Santamaria. No praise can be too high for Santamaria’s original campaigns, to eliminate Communist control of Australia’s trade unions. Unfortunately, once he proceeded to turn his fire upon his fellow Catholics, particularly on those Catholic hierarchs of impeccable anti-Communist credentials who happened to displease him, he undid the benefits of his own fine work. The outcome, illustrating perfectly the law of unintended consequences, was to marginalise pur sang Catholicism in Australian political life, for a long time and perhaps forever.

During the 1970s and the 1980s, all this changed. Paisleyite pastors who once had bellowed from the pulpit about Pius XII’s grand plot to invade Sydney Harbour in a submarine now found themselves hard-pressed to find a pulpit. Australian Catholics, on their side, lost their old certitudes. To some extent this loss merely reflected what overtook Catholicism in other countries; but in Australia, three strong Archbishops who had upheld doctrinal standards – and would probably have protected local Catholicism from the worst of Vatican II’s dire legacy – died or retired within ten years of each other. From 1970 the Latin Mass disappeared from Australian churches, thus breaking many hearts, particularly when it grew apparent that anybody who pined for the centuries-old liturgy would be treated by the church establishment as a common criminal. (Most Australian dioceses have remained scandalously indifferent to Benedict XVI’s freeing-up of the Latin Mass in 2007.) Large-scale university education became available to millions of Australian Catholics (and non-Catholics) from 1973; by 1980 Australian Catholics had penetrated the higher reaches of that last WASP Establishment hold-out, the Liberal Party. Later the Liberals produced their first Catholic State Premier: the Budapest-born Nick Greiner, who ran New South Wales from 1988 to 1992. Even Turnbull presented himself as a Catholic convert, though his apparently endless enthusiasm for taxpayer-funded abortion would probably have brought about his excommunication if he lived in the States. Now we have an aspiring Prime Minister, who is a devout if flawed Catholic.

His chances of defeating Kevin Rudd at the next Federal election, which must take place before November 2010, are minimal. So far, Rudd (ever since his 2007 electoral triumph over John Howard, who lost his own parliamentary seat) has enjoyed opinion poll approval ratings unmatched by any of his predecessors except, briefly in the mid-1980s, Bob Hawke. Rudd is a polished media performer who speaks skilfully in the House of Representatives as well as on the hustings or in the more choreographed location of a press conference. Mercifully, he has not adopted the self-destructive idiocy of intellectual slumming. Hawke, in spite of being an Oxford graduate born to upper-middle-class privilege, affected a yob persona as repellent as it was fraudulent. Rudd, born to genuine upper-middle-class privilege, affected a yob persona as repellent as it was fraudulent. Rudd, born to genuine indigence, has never looked or acted like anything other than what he is: a former scholarship winner, who can construct grammatical if convoluted sentences, and has read some serious thinkers. The general esteem he continues to attract is for him rather than for his party. No-one among his cabinet ministers looks like an obvious heir, should he resign or perish. Few among his cabinet ministers – the exception is Deputy
PM Julia Gillard — would be known even by name, let alone by sight, to the average voter. Cartoonists in the daily Australian newspapers toil vainly to make them identifiable. Miss Gillard, however, is a cartoonist’s delight, with her shock of straight red hair and beaky nose. So are Abbott and his precursors, less through their facial features than through their sheer unpopularity.

Abbott is confronted with the problem which faces any intelligent Australian Catholic for whom religion means something: the complete lack, in the Australia of 2010, not so much of a Catholic culture as of a Catholic infrastructure. Fifty-odd or sixty-odd years ago Abbott could well have been a Catholic Premier of his native New South Wales, but the reason the actual holders of that office in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s tended to be unpretentious, nuts-and-bolts folk, lay in the sanctions which their own church would have imposed on them for spectacular villainy. Australia was fortunate, back then, in the calibre of its Catholic clerical leadership. Had John Joseph Cahill, New South Wales’ Catholic Premier from 1952 till his death in 1959, been a kleptocrat, a drunken or a drug-user, he would never have received from any Australian Catholic cleric the automatic benison that Boston and New York Cardinals lavished on the more odious Kennedy scions. Cahill would have been politically annihilated within a week.

Today Australian Catholicism is, but for the flamboyant Sydney-based Cardinal George Pell, bereft of diocesan leaders respected (or even known) outside their own communion. The country’s other Catholic bishops seldom rise above tolerable mediocrity, but overall they are free from personal malevolence and are chaste in thought, word and deed. To them, the wilder shores of ‘love’, as notoriously explored by Episcopal priapists in Ireland, are unfamiliar. Nor are Australian bishops heretical. A generation ago, many of their predecessors engaged in nudge-nudge defiance of the Vatican on sexual subjects, and ignored the Vatican on almost everything else. These days such defiance has grown rare, if only because lay Catholics too young to remember any pope before John Paul II tend to be orthodox upholders of Catholic sexual policy, and could well make life uncomfortable for any bishop who openly challenged that policy.

Any of Abbott’s plans for long-term political survival, will depend largely not exclusively on whether ‘John Paul II Catholics’ (as well as those belonging to the traditional Lutheran and Presbyterian parishes) will support him. Would their support be enough to counteract the militant fury of those atheists who occupy the Australian media’s commanding heights? These atheists’ mission is to drive Abbott out of public life, as they have themselves admitted. The Atheist nomenklatura in its anti-Abbott campaign includes ex-Catholics like Britain’s Nick Cohen. Convent-school product Germaine Greer represents the ex-Catholic breed, notable more for the personal quality of her spite than for any fundamental differences between her and her less clever brethren. The Australian Communist Party, in its glory days before, during, and after World War II, consisted largely of erstwhile Catholic altar-servers with Hibernian surnames. Present-day Australia, like present-day Ireland, is awash with the ‘misery memoirs’ of ex-Catholics who, in the grand tradition of the late liar-in-chief Frank McCourt, have equipped themselves with fictional (but often extremely lucrative) backgrounds as childhood victims of cane-wielding Christian Brothers.

The Australian Atheist nomenklatura’s other ally against Abbott is the ordinary Catholic in the pews, or rather, usually away from the pews. Mass attendance is as low (around 15 per cent) among Australian Catholics as among British and Canadian Catholics. In 2010 the lay Australian Catholic is well fed, well housed, and endowed with much greater disposable income than his grandfather. He is likelier to have an Italian, Maltese, Lebanese, East Timorese, Chinese, or Filipino heritage than an Irish one. While his grandfather probably went to school at thirteen, he will usually have a degree. Nevertheless he is more ignorant of his own faith than his grandfather would ever have thought feasible for anyone neither a Marxist nor half-witted. Theology usually means nothing to him. Nor does Catholic history and most Catholic Anglophone literature. Entirely vanished is the noble tradition of Australian Catholic blue-collar auto-didacticism, by which farm-hands, boilermakers and apprentice bricklayers spent their few leisure hours in the nearest library. It is an alarming experience to meet Catholics who, notwithstanding their first-class honours degrees in business studies or accountancy, have failed to discover that any Catholic ever wrote any English-language book except Lord of the Rings. They are unlikely to cheer on someone whose own Catholic learning (like Abbott’s) far surpasses their own. Their ignorance makes them easy prey for any atheist with a TV slot or a newspaper column. It also makes them the despair of their priests, who in Australia are usually pious and worthwhile men. Priests might well vote for Abbott. Will their flocks do so?

Even if Abbott could somehow subdue his atheist tormentors, he suffers from being, in a sense, a leader without a party. He would never have attained the Liberal leadership in the first place, except for his fellow Liberals’ unwilling admission that they are staring down the barrel of the same gun which finished...
off a previous anti-Labour group, the United Australia Party (UAP), during the 1940s.

Sir Robert Menzies started a new right-wing movement from scratch, and — freed from the UAP incubus — went on to serve as Prime Minister for nearly seventeen years (1949-66). Tragically, Menzies failed to groom a fitting successor. Would that he had been followed as Liberal leader by someone with his own administrative courage. As it was, the Liberals between 1966 and 1975 groaned under four of the most risible lightweights ever to sully a First World nation.

The ethical fibre of one such lightweight, Sir John Gorton — Prime Minister, after a fashion, from 1968 to 1971 — can be summarised in one solitary jibe by subsequent PM Gough: ‘Before this [1969] campaign began we had a distinct understanding — that he wouldn’t tell any lies about me if I didn’t tell the truth about him.’ With leaders instead of time-servers at the Liberal helm, we would probably have been spared the reigns of Whitlam, Hawke, and Paul Keating.

Abbott enjoys personality in abundance. Perhaps that is a clue to his ultimate political fate. If he were to embrace his inner Barry Goldwater, he would almost certainly still lose the next election; but he would lose it with decorum, and what is more, with a sense of setting his opponents’ subsequent agenda, as Senator Goldwater himself did. Rudd knows that (given the inability of the quite personable former Tourism Minister Joe Hockey to survive even the first round of December’s Liberal leadership ballot) Abbott is the sole possible opposition leader who is not merely a joke. He might be able to give Labour a salutary scare in 2010. Nobody else now in parliament can. Remove Abbott from the political equation, and Rudd — unless he does something incredibly reckless — will be tempted to echo the ugly boast of Louisiana’s four-term Governor Edwin Edwards. About one gubernatorial contest, Edwards bragged: ‘The only way I can lose this election is if I’m caught in bed with either a dead girl or a live boy.’

R J Stove is a Melbourne author.

Conservative Classic — 38

Le Livre noir du Communisme

David Ashton

By our enemies, they shall know us.

‘Marxism-Leninism is a totalising political system’ engaged in a vast social engineering experiment reaching into ‘every facet of every individual’s life’ (Aurel Braun). As supporters of traditional patriotism, family values, private property, voluntary associations, spiritual impulse, aristocratic virtues and free speech, conservative people have been the primary targets, if not always successful adversaries, of revolutionary leftists during their poisonous pathways to power and their murderous misuse of it.

This Black Book is a singular inventory of ‘crimes, terror, oppression’ resulting from the ideology of our worst enemy, and has therefore become, by counter-reflection, a conservative classic.

Its first appearance in Paris thirteen years ago provoked an outcry from indignant remnants of ‘every facet of every individual’s life’ (Aurel Braun). As supporters of traditional patriotism, family values, private property, voluntary associations, spiritual impulse, aristocratic virtues and free speech, conservative people have been the primary targets, if not always successful adversaries, of revolutionary leftists during their poisonous pathways to power and their murderous misuse of it.

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Its first appearance in Paris thirteen years ago provoked an outcry from indignant remnants of ‘progressive mankind’ and their ‘liberal’ automatons. Eleven fully qualified scholars had dared to search beyond ‘partisan propaganda’ and ‘voluntary amnesia’ to collate carefully the devastating data on the ruthless record of Marxist-Leninist parties, all linked by ideology and mostly by organisation, from Soviet Russia in 1917 to Afghanistan in 1989. The Comintern rated a special chapter.

The editor Stéphane Courtois focussed first of all on criminality. This was not merely a regrettable preliminary or occasional aberration of communism, but a ‘defining characteristic’ still awaiting proper moral assessment. L’Humanité has denounced him in both theory and practice, Lenin and his successors excluded from humanity all capitalists, the bourgeoisie, counter-revolutionaries, and others, turning them into absolute enemies in their sociological and political discourse.... these terms were entirely elastic and led directly to crimes against humanity.

His second purpose has been to expand popular remembrance of the innocent, often anonymous victims.
of ‘a juggernaut that has systematically sought to erase even their memory’. Who can decently complain that at least a little respectful thought should be given, for example, to the captives shot or tortured in dungeons from Moscow to Madrid, skeletal Polish children exchanged for wartime supplies, ‘ethnically cleansed’ Cossacks, Karachai and Kurds, publicly pilloried Chinese academics, emasculated Nicaraguans, assassinated defectors, and millions more?

To the persecution of individuals of diverse background, occupation, nationality, faith and opinion was added the wholesale ‘liquidation’ of population ‘segments’, including those inescapably born into a targeted social group. So how can it honestly ‘detract’ from widespread recognition of any other specific 20th century genocide, or offend their own survivors, for this ‘most colossal case of political carnage in history’ to be adequately memorialised, and its lessons also communicated to younger generations? Would a few ‘museums’ be too much to ask?

Just consider the parliamentary indifference and media disdain shown in November 1967 towards the huge half-century Commemoration of the Victims of Communism, which brought together Serbs and Croats, Hungarians and Romanians, Germans and Jews, Christians and Buddhists, and so many others from Albania to Zanzibar, into the Albert Hall. Why such ‘awkward silence’ from politicians, academics and clergymen over the intrinsic criminality of a catastrophic enterprise that has touched ‘about one-third of humanity on four continents’, despite accumulated revelations of its wickedness?

Close analysis of official publications, plus reports from numerous refugees and even some journalists, had always provided enough information about the horrific scale of ‘proletarian dictatorship’, despite its unparalleled internal censorship, buttressed by heavy penalties, and the external protection of hypocrisy, if occasionally plausible, propaganda against ‘imperialism’ or ‘fascist falsification’. The Daily Worker, for instance, told its British readers that the Soviet ‘slave labour lie’ repeated by ‘right-wing Labour leaders’ originated with Dr Goebbels, and alleged that government accounts of North Korean maltreatment of our soldiers were incredible because ‘no names’ were disclosed; both assertions were equally untrue.

Skilled operatives readily exploited the limitless credulity, self-deluding optimism and self-despising guilt found across the ‘democratic’ world with incessant slogan-language about ‘peace and progress’ and ‘international equality’.

Endorsement of this Black Book demands neither approval of any malpractices ascribed to ‘global capitalism’ and ‘western colonialism’, nor arbitrary dismissal of whatever positive features can be found in countries that call themselves ‘socialist’. Mao’s Great Leap ‘Forward’ and the Ukrainian ‘Holodomyr’ are not excused by famine in Ireland or Bengal. It is nevertheless objectionable to hear Stalin depicted as a ‘Great Russian Tory’ and his ‘workout’ successors labelled ‘conservative’, or to be told that the sadistic leveller Pol Pot, who learned his Marxism in France where Sartre was explaining how terror could act as the midwife of humanism, was really another ‘extreme rightist’.

This massively documented compilation, like other important historical works, will need slight improvements. Several estimated grand totals of mass-deaths may require downward revision, though remaining enormous, while archives and excavations are simultaneously developing accurate information on hitherto little-known atrocities. For instance, Khrushchev was recorded as claiming that a ‘million’ troops perished in the Winter War against Finland, whereas recent military experts calculate irrecoverable losses no higher than 134,000; it seems, however, that over four thousand repatriated Soviet PoWs were subsequently executed or sent to harsh northern concentration camps.

Tony Judt remarked, somewhat hopefully, of the Black Book, ‘No one will any longer be able to claim ignorance or uncertainty about the criminal nature of Communism, and those who had begun to forget will be forced to remember anew.’ And there is still more intellectual ammunition to come.

Nevertheless, as Martin Malia’s foreword to the Harvard University Press translation observes, any realistically complete accounting of this enemy faces an intractable psychological barrier, among the optimistic souls in this unjust world, of closing the door to an egalitarian ‘utopia’, so that truth-seekers must ‘gird their loins for a very Long March indeed before Communism is accorded its fair share of absolute evil’.

Worse still, amid the continuing financial, demographic and weapon-system challenges to western civilization, new barbarian radicals, cast in a mould similar to their red-flag predecessors, though less literate and more impatient, have started menacingly to assemble within our rusting and rattling gates.

David Ashton is a writer and researcher.
The Salisbury Review listens to the BBC

(BBC Radio 4 Woman’s Hour)
Who’s the Mummy Now?

This was a long discussion about under funding in UK maternity services and several mentions by practitioners of “an unexpected rise in the birth rate”. Mention was made of millions of extra pounds put in to cope with this, but it is “still not enough”. No one mentioned that this “unexpected rise” which we are all paying for, was because of immigration. As this fact cannot be mentioned the question of the burgeoning birth rate went unquestioned. Of course listeners would be filling in the gaps.

BBC TV News
Heated Comments

The International Panel on Climate Change claimed that one of the most serious consequences of atmospheric warming would be the melting of the Himalayan glaciers by 2035 causing the Ganges to run dry and the death of tens of millions of Indian peasants. No sooner had the BBC reported this ‘fact’ — endlessly repeated on its news for the past two years — was a fairy tale, than up popped a talking head, one of a coterie of experts employed especially for this purpose by the corporation, to reassure us that ‘the science of climate change’ is nevertheless incontestable. This is like a flat earther saying that just because the earth looks round from space does not change the fact that ‘flat earth science’ has, without a shadow of a doubt, proved it flat.

BBC 4 (‘Thinking Allowed’ with Prof Laurie Taylor)
Chinese No Takeaway

A group discussion based on a book about ex-pats who have chosen to continue living in Hong Kong after the British have given it back to the Chinese. The portrait of these mostly elderly people is very unflattering. One commentator says they ‘lead small lives’, because they do not mix enough with the native Chinese and in particular do not learn Mandarin. She says a few elderly men do speak it fluently but that is because they have Chinese partners, the rest keep themselves to their own community. This is implicitly seen as wrong and very limiting. British behaviour is also seen as unacceptable, because they comment unfavourably on Chinese personal habits. The example given is that they object to the Chinese spitting in the swimming pool. This is seen as an objection to ‘cultural behaviour’.

BBC Favouritism

The actor Ian Carmichael OBE was beloved by those of us who enjoy Jeeves and Wooster, Lord Peter Wimsey and the Little World of Gerald C Potter but the announcement of his death was last on the running on Radio 4, I am not sure whether it received a mention on BBC TV at all, as I am concentrating on Radio. The centenary of the birth of Joyce Grenfell has been ignored by the BBC apart from a mention on BBC R7. How unlike the response to the news of the death of jazz musician Johnny Dankworth — the man who wrote the theme tune to The Avengers in the early 60s, first on the running on Radio 4 news, announced at 6am in a voice which suggested that a leading member of the royal family had suddenly died. A special report by correspondent Torin Douglas followed, and later a whole feature on him on ‘Broadcasting House’. Love of jazz, as opposed to a love of Bertie Wooster, is of course part of the canon of political correctness. The BBC is constantly threatening to put more jazz into our schedules and has recently introduced whole rafts of it onto Radio 3.
The twentieth century ought to be regarded as the heyday of English humorous writing. Seeds were planted and tended in that Garden of Humour, the Strand Magazine of the 1890’s. They grew up into the new century’s first flowering of comic genius: W W Jacobs, P G Wodehouse, Conan Doyle and H G Wells all began as Strand contributors. Sad to say, the last two succumbed to solemnity, but the first two supplied merriment when it was most sorely needed. After the World Wars and the demise of The Strand, only two great new humorous writers emerged: Honor Tracey and Michael Wharton.

Poor Honor Tracey! She deserves to be remembered as more than a footnote in A N Wilson’s biography of Iris Murdoch. Infinitely more talented than her friend Murdoch, she wrote sparkling novels of Irish life, usually from the point of view of the former Ascendancy. Somerville and Ross described the Ascendancy in power — constantly tricked and humiliated by the Catholic peasantry. Tracey’s novels describe the Ascendancy in its death throes, the peasant trickery now at its height and moving in for the kill. (Oddly enough her heroes belong to the Church of Ireland, but Tracey herself became a Roman Catholic convert.)

Her novels were never reviewed but moved in and out of public library shelves with startling rapidity, all through the sixties and seventies. Nevertheless she died in poverty, blind and suffering from shingles.

Michael Wharton wrote some of his finest work during the sixties and seventies, but continued writing in much the same vein until his death a few years ago. The Way of the World by Peter Simple was the Daily Telegraph readers’ treat and reward for ploughing through the often horrifying news in the rest of the paper. Some readers cheated by turning forward to Peter Simple first, and tackling the news afterwards. Non-Daily Telegraph readers often mistook Wharton’s magic world for everyday reportage. My Yorkshire brother-in-law insisted that Alderman Foodbotham was a real person — ‘I read about him in your Tory paper.’

Foodbotham was only one of Wharton’s collection of grotesques, the envy of Charles Dickens looking ruefully from above. Michael Wharton coined many phrases now in popular use. ‘Rentacrowd’ symbolises the anti-police mob ready for a protest march at a moment’s notice. According to Wharton these demonstrators were part-human, part-clockwork robot. ‘Hampstead Thinker’ remains the term for an upper class English Communist. It is a useful term, though it may grow less so as aged Thinkers are supplanted by their less idealistic fashion-glossy offspring.

The phrase ‘Race Relations Industry’ was diffused by Wharton’s journalist friends in the Press at large. It has been taken and used quite seriously by the ‘black activists’ of the Black Press, mouthpiece of this industrial-sized edifice of deceit. Wharton’s wonderful column was illustrated by master cartoonist Michael ffolkes, now with Michael in Columnar Heaven. It was a treat to eavesdrop on their Johnsonian conversation in the Telegraph pub, over a corned beef sandwich.

Michael Wharton’s autobiography The Missing Will is published by Slightly Foxed.
In the large lexicon of the Left’s political abuse no word is more overused than ‘Fascist’. These days, of course, it is sprayed around as liberally as Gordon Brown’s fairy gold; being applied indiscriminately to anyone of whom socialist sympathisers disapprove, whatever their true politics. Utterly lost in all this is the real meaning of the term, but one thing is certain: the man who ruled Portugal for almost four decades — Antonio Salazar — was not a fascist, even though he is routinely called one by those who should know better.

Born near Coimbra in central Portugal in 1888, Salazar often stressed his humble origins as a son of the Lusitanian soil, though in fact he was descended from minor nobility on his mother’s side. His father, originally a farm labourer, had bettered himself and ended as a small landowner. The social structure in Portugal’s rural regions had been unchanged for centuries, with farmers tending smallholdings in the relatively prosperous north and centre, while impoverished and landless peasants hacked a bare subsistence on the vast estates in the poorer south.

The Salazar family, like most rural Portuguese, were pious Catholics, and Salazar himself, a bright boy from the cradle, was originally destined for the Church and sent to study at a seminary. While the future dictator was cloistered in the countryside, Portugal was undergoing profound and seismic political and social shocks. Like Britain, its ally since medieval times, Portugal was a maritime power, and acquired a vast overseas empire in the 15th and 16th centuries, including Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Macao in China, and Goa in India.

However, an exhausting thirty-year struggle to free herself from domination by her larger Iberian neighbour, Spain, and the shattering Lisbon earthquake of 1755, weakened Portuguese power — as did the Peninsula War against Napoleon, during which the ancient ties with Britain were firmly sealed — not least by British domination of the Port wine trade around Oporto, Portugal’s second city. The loss of Brazil in 1821 and economic stagnation throughout the 19th century produced a political crisis similar to that convulsing Spain: a monarchy allied to the Church and conservative rural Portugal seemed to stand in the way of radical change proposed by liberal and republican middle-class circles in the cities. The crisis came to a head in 1908, when King Carlos and his heir Prince Felipe were shot by republican gunmen while crossing Lisbon’s main square in their carriage. The young King Manuel II — who had narrowly escaped the double assassination of his father and brother with a flesh wound — was unable, at 18, to produce the stability that Portugal so sorely needed, and two years later was forced into English exile. The chaotic first Portuguese republic was born.

Mirroring the anarchic situation that preceded the Civil War in 1930’s Spain, the triumphant Portuguese republicans, having got rid of the monarchy, split between moderate Liberals who wanted reform but not revolution, and radical extremists who demanded full-blooded socialism. What both sides could agree on was anti-Clericalism, and in the years before the Great War, the power of the Church came under sustained Government assault. It was to defend the Church that Salazar first entered politics.

He joined the furious opposition created by the savage persecution of the Priesthood. For many Portuguese in remote rural areas, education in Church schools was the only ladder to escape appalling poverty, and by closing the schools, the republican regime appeared to be kicking that ladder away. An incensed Salazar resolved to fight for the Church’s rights, both constitutionally, and on the streets. In 1914 he switched from his seminary to Coimbra University, to read law. He joined the Catholic Centre, a moderate conservative party, was elected as an MP, and acquired a growing reputation as a level-headed economist — a subject he eventually taught at Coimbra.

In 1917 Portugal unwisely joined its oldest ally on the battlefields of the western front. Untrained, riddled with venereal disease, and with no dogs in the fight, the Portuguese conscripts made poor cannon fodder in the trenches. In April 1918, when the two Portuguese Corps were the direct target of a full-on German offensive on the River Lys, the results were predictable: they ran like rabbits. At home, the unpopular war merely heightened popular discontent; weak and short-lived republican governments alternated with equally brief military dictators. In May 1926, a coup d’etat finally brought Portugal’s chaotic republic to an end — and Salazar had his first taste of power.

Invited to join the new Government as Finance
Minister, he resigned after a fortnight, explaining that political squabbling and in-fighting made it impossible for him to do his job. Two years later, the Government decided that they could not do without his transparent modest honesty and economic talents and recalled him from Coimbra for a second stint as Finance Minister (a post he retained after becoming Prime Minister in 1932). Salazar was clear about what his country needed: order and structured progress and an end to the yowling background noise that passed for Portuguese Parliamentary politics.

Once given dictatorial power by President Carmorna in 1932, Salazar, befitting his legal background, scrupulously observed the constitutional niceties and set about rescuing his country from chaos in the teeth of the gathering Great Depression. Deeply impressed by the social conscience displayed by modern Catholicism, he married paternalistic care for Portugal’s poor with corporate ordering of the country: state-run trade unions; a ban on Communism; and a watchful political police to ensure that the ban was observed.

Austere and reclusive himself, he stabilised the state’s finances, and used what money there was to invest in rural infrastructure notably in a programme of public works that included the construction of damned reservoirs to ensure that Portugal had a reliable and plentiful supply of water and to allow small businesses to flourish. He cracked down hard on opposition — especially from the Communist Left — and set up his own party the ‘National Union’ to run what he called the ‘Novo estado’ (New State’). Whatever else the New State was, it was not fascist.

Portugal, like the Falange in its Spanish neighbour, had a genuine blue-shirted Fascist movement, called the National Syndicalists, under a Führer-figure named Rolao Presto. But far from supporting or co-opting them, as his fellow Iberian dictator Franco would do to the Falange, in 1934, when European fascism was riding high — Salazar banned them, complaining ‘They are always feverish, excited and discontented ... shouting, when faced with the impossible, More! More!’

When Civil War broke out in Spain in 1936, Salazar supported Franco’s insurrection against the left-wing Republic, cunningly enrolling many former fascists in a blue-shirted Portuguese Legion which he sent to fight on Franco’s side — thus ensuring the permanent gratitude of a victorious Franco. He refused, however, to emulate the Caudillo’s chumminess with Hitler and Mussolini, keeping Portugal strictly neutral in World War Two, while doing all he could to aid the Allies covertly.

By the 1960s, Salazar could look back with quiet satisfaction at three decades of stability and steadily growing prosperity. But little Portugal could not resist the winds of change that Harold Macmillan had seen blowing across Africa. In 1961, an anti-colonialist revolt broke out in Angola, and soon spread to Portugal’s other African colonies, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. At the same time Nehru violently seized the tiny Portuguese colony of Goa. Realising that the independence movements were Marxist led and inspired, Salazar refused to give in, and soon up to one half of Portugal’s carefully husbanded GDP was devoted to fighting these unwinnable wars, while thousands of Portuguese men went into exile elsewhere in Europe to escape the draft.

The cost of the colonial wars eventually undermined Salazar’s regime — though he himself did not live to see it. In 1968, a deckchair collapsed under the dictator, hitting his head and setting off a cerebral haemorrhage. He died in 1970, and four years later, young Leftist officers overthrew the remnants of his regime. Portugal briefly returned to the political chaos which had preceded Salazar, during which independence was handed to the feuding and murderous Marxist movements in Angola and Mozambique. It is debatable whether life for ordinary Africans has improved in the old Portuguese colonies since Portugal’s enforced departure.

Today, the homeland itself, under a restored Parliamentary democracy is a keen — indeed key — EU member, with a former Portuguese revolutionary Maoist, Barroso, as its presiding dictator, with powers old Salazar could only have dreamed of. In contrast to Spain where Franco — although like Salazar, no fascist — really did kill hecatombs of people to establish his rule, the body count during Salazar’s rule was light. It is significant that the hatred still felt by many Spaniards for Franco is notably absent in Portuguese attitudes to Salazar. By his own cautious lights, the old boy did signal service to his country, and to the cause of Christian civilisation in a very dark time.

Nigel Jones is writing a new history of the Tower of London (Hutchinson).
The world is rapidly becoming a more dangerous place, so we must love and look after one another; particularly we should remember Christians who are suffering persecution in many lands. In Pakistan, individual Christians and their families are attacked every day and churches are routinely burned down. Recently, a Christian lorry driver in that country stopped at a roadside stall for a cup of tea. He made the mistake of wearing a Cross. The stallholder was upset by this, so he called his friends and together they stoned the lorry driver to death. Again, a Christian was making his way from Saudi Arabia to Syria, when he was impeded by three men who noticed a tattoo of the Cross on the man’s wrist. So they cut his hand off.

These are not isolated incidents. In Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and dozens of other places, Christians are being murdered and dispossessed. In Egypt six Coptic Christians and a security official were killed in a drive-by shooting outside a church on Christmas Eve. Such incidents rarely gets reported in the papers or the BBC and other news channels. However, both the Arab TV channel Al Jazeera and the Jewish Jerusalem Post feature the persecution of Christians more prominently than our mass media. If you want to see the extent of this persecution, do a Google search for The Barnabas Fund, a charity which reports on these atrocities and also supports distressed Christians worldwide.

What do our Bishops and Archbishops say about these worldwide outrages? Next to nothing. They explain that they are deeply committed to interfaith discussions with moderate Muslims and do not wish to jeopardise these talks by drawing attention to the widespread persecution that is taking place. However, moderate Muslims are not responsible for the persecution; it is the barbarism of the Islamo-fascists in their worldwide jihad. A barbarism is a form of hell on earth. So the same jihadists who suicide bomb Christians and burn down churches also blow up other Muslims and burn down their mosques.

It is hard to imagine a worse persecution, but there is one: and worse because it is home-grown. Throughout Europe Christians are under attack from militant atheists and secularists highly placed in governments and political institutions. It is illegal now in Britain to teach in state schools that Christianity is true. The 2000-year-old institution of Christian marriage is now officially regarded as no more significant than any of the other fashionable arrangements. David Willetts said two days before Christmas that marriage will become the province only of the middle classes if the present trend continues.

Churches have always been recognised as charities. Not any longer. Churches will soon have to apply for charitable status by proving that what they do is for public benefit. Hitherto, the Christian religion was always regarded in this country as a good thing in itself. Now the ancient office of churchwarden has been turned into that of a Trustee and churches must register to achieve charitable status. Where do the secularists think the very word charity came from? Throughout public policy there is a deliberate and sustained attempt to marginalise the Christian faith. Church schools have their admissions policies scrutinised by government officials and secularists in high places have declared that they wish to see Christianity removed from the public realm and faith relegated to the purely private practice of individual eccentrics. In this way the faith which created European civilisation will have no more voice in public life. Soon England will be no longer a Christian country.

Every day we receive news of fresh persecutions: Recently a peripatetic teacher, Olive Jones, was sacked from her post for offering to pray for one of her pupils who was sick. It’s not as if Olive held the girl down and conducted a violent exorcism: she merely offered to pray and when her offer was rejected, she withdrew. Still she was reported to the school commissioners and sacked.

A decade ago Osama bin Laden said there would be no need for a military campaign in order to win Europe for Islam. He taunted us: You lack the stomach for a fight. Given the aggressiveness of our own powerful secularists, the pathetic lie-down-and-die attitude of the church leaders, the demographic revolution brought about by mass immigration and relative birth rates, Europe will no longer be a Christian continent within a generation.

However, these persecutions and the bleak future overarching us are the essence of Christianity. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said, Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you for my sake. This was no casual remark for He meant to warn us and to encourage us. The Christian Father Tertullian told us: The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. This is because at the centre of our faith is the fact of life out of death. So when we are under persecution we should not grumble or shrink or ask What's the use? and, like the bishops, keep our heads down. We should redouble our enthusiasm for the faith. Let us get right to the middle of this matter of persecution. Our enemies hate Christianity because it tells the truth. As usual T S Eliot expressed this supremely well:

Why should men love the church? Why should they love her laws? She tells them of Life and Death and of all that they would forget. She is tender where they would be hard and hard where they like to be soft. She tells them of Evil and Sin and other unpleasant facts. They constantly try to escape from the darkness outside and within by dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to be good.

Peter Mullen
Sir,
Patricia Morgan showed in her article ‘Adopting Sense’ (SR Winter 2009) an impressive support for adoption, but with one important exception: her two final paragraphs which concerned her disbelief in the power and permanence of psychological damage done by stresses to babies in the first few years of life.

She is, however out of date. Numerous studies carried out in the last five or six years have provided more solid evidence — based as much on the physical aspects of neurology, endocrinology and the immune system as on psychological aspects — of the actual nature, severity and resistance to change or damage done from early pregnancy to the third year and later by stress of all kinds. The dismissive remark at the beginning of her penultimate paragraph: ‘Not quite’, referring to an article emphasising the critical nature of experiences in the first three years of life, is the product of other factors than objective information. I would ask her, and any of your readers interested in this area, to scan the references (on the website).

Unfortunately while adoption by loving parents in the first two years of life has a good chance of undoing the damage brought about by stress from the intra-uterine period, adoption by the most ideal adopters after that period has very little chance of success: it would be exceptional rather than to be expected.

I applaud her support for adoption in place of State ‘care’, although in my clinical experience I met more distressed and disturbed adopted children than I like to remember. Adoption is not necessarily easy.

Hellmut Karle
(Formerly Head of Child Psychology, Guy’s Hospital)
St Leger sous Beuvray, France

Sir,
I was delighted to see Christie Davies’s comment about the continuing Estonia-Russia issue. Russia has not yet admitted that its superpower status is long gone, and therefore continues bullying smaller countries like Estonia to bolster its regime in the eyes of ordinary Russians.

In Estonia one can see the same cultural tendencies which used to exist in Finland years ago. During the 1920’s the Finnish tended to have an inferiority complex with the Swedes who were richer and had a better international status than the Finns. Likewise with the Estonians. As Davies pointed out, ethnic divisions cannot be ignored. An American author, Ward Just, lived in Paris for many years without learning the language but he was well liked by local people because they understood that he had come to Paris to write. The real difference between ethnic groups in the Baltic states will not be the language but their loyalty to their homeland. The real indicator of the Baltic national identities should be the citizen’s response to Russian aggression. If a citizen stands up for freedom, he should be regarded as a full citizen of any Baltic country, regardless of the language he speaks.

Riku Kinnunen
Porvoo, Finland

Sir,
‘Why did no-one see it coming?’ asked Her Majesty. Thus noted A W Purdue (SR Winter 2009) in remarking on the banking debacle and also in reminding us of a similar failure to predict the collapse of the Soviet Union.

It is now becoming painfully obvious to many people in Great Britain and now in Ireland that the formation of a second tier of government, the European Union, cannot hold. Many are now awakening to the huge expansion of the costs and realising that each nation has an independence which none can afford to lose.

Beverley Pyke
Alderney, CI

Sir,
The editorial in the Winter magazine will be read by people who will be thankful to know that they are not alone in witnessing the decline of our world at an ever increasing speed. Worse, this descent seems to be supported by the church, parliament, education authorities and many ordinary people.

I think that there are many people of like minds who would support a venture to restore the values of a finer living: honour, family, discipline. Many years ago faith and fear held the nation in a firm order of mind and behaviour. That has now gone, but could we not recall that traditional way of life which described us as ‘this happy breed’?

Rowland Hill
Vinca, France
Another Fine Mess
Charles Cecil

The Trouble with Markets, Saving Capitalism from Itself, Roger Bootle, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009, £18.00/US$29.95.

Roger Bootle is a practical economist who knows the global financial markets well, for his career spans the international financial markets and academia. In his latest book, he takes further the commentaries that he made in his previous books — The Death of Inflation and Money for Nothing. He is open (and over-modest) about the limitations of his previous books — which were themselves valuable contributions to understanding the major market changes which have led to the current problems.

He has no hesitation in making crushing judgments on the failures and blindness of bankers (Central and private sector), economists and politicians. One of the pleasures of reading The Trouble with Markets comes from the well-conceived and stinging punches which he delivers liberally. He writes admirably clearly and with humour and also takes a global view of the issues, distinguishing between approaches which might benefit a particular sector of economic activity (say financial services) or a particular country and those which benefit the world economy.

However, he makes specific proposals for getting the world economic system out of the mess it is in (he calls the crisis the Great Implosion) with recommendations for improving the financial system locally and globally as well as guidelines for how to invest a portfolio today for the short and medium term. This is courageous and refreshing.

Bootle’s analysis of the causes of the Great Implosion does not amount to a condemnation of capitalism but a criticism of uncontrolled capitalism. With clarity he savages the concepts of efficient market theory and that mythical entity, Homo economicus. They are very convenient for the justification of certain financial activities but these have little contact not only with normal human behaviour but also with an ethical approach to business.

He emphasises the importance of confidence and liquidity in the financial system and reminds us why a collapsing bank or banks can do much more damage to an economy or individuals than the collapse of a non-financial company. The financial system is fragile because it is largely based on trust and once that is undermined — nationally or globally — the damage can be swift and huge. It was no surprise for me to be told recently that a bank trying to employ a senior, experienced lending banker is finding it almost impossible to identify candidates.

He shows that much of the economic activity in the financial sector and consequently the wealth created is distributive: that it moves wealth from one hand to another but does not increase the net wealth of the globe or the country. In a terse phrase applicable obviously but not exclusively to hedge funds, he says ‘the world is long only’.

Bootle makes it quite clear that he finds it difficult to understand the justification for the very high salaries in the financial sector and ascribes it largely to the lack of competition and also the rise of ‘ownerless corporations’ where the main shareholders are institutions such as pension funds and insurance companies which do not have the personal exposure that would have characterised the shareholder registers of companies earlier in the 20th Century. In his eyes, the obsession with making and spending money amongst some investment bankers is akin to mental disorder.

Bootle is a champion of much of Keynes — properly interpreted. For instance he cites Keynes’s conclusion that once aggregate demand has fallen, men will not readily be able to get themselves back into employment by their own efforts, thus requiring collective action — and today international collective action. He reminds us that if there is increased saving, this does not automatically translate into increased lending or investment without an underpinning of confidence in individual businesses and banks. Without confidence, recovery will be feeble and long in coming — and the revival of confidence requires the injection of concerted and government-sponsored international action. He decries the purists of the Chicago School as lacking the appreciation of how things actually work in practice (and in crisis) as opposed to the theoretical. There is the justified implication that there is in the Chicago School a degree of heartlessness alongside the flawed practicality.

Interestingly Bootle believes that the real risk at present globally is deflation, not inflation, and that governments and central banks are not really facing...
the requirements to fend off what will be damaging if allowed to become embedded. It is not that there is no danger of inflation a long way ahead, but not until the potential for deflation has been neutralised. Deflation only requires wages to lag behind productivity growth for prices to start falling and people to start selling assets before it is too late to pay off their debts.

He quite rightly criticises the obsession with the short term in the financial (and as a result also in the non-financial) markets. Quoted companies are pressured to produce quarterly earnings statements to feed the investment analysts and fund managers who rarely take the long-term view on companies. The rewards are also skewed towards the short term. It is true also that in many companies, many executives now stay for such short periods that they have lost the pride and loyalty to the firm that is so critical to performance and stability.

Taking a global stance, Bootle proposes such principles for recovery as the rebuilding of the banking system, boosting income, wealth and liquidity, stabilising the public finances without too great a cut in personal incomes, and a recovery of confidence. He makes a strong plea for not attacking government deficits too quickly or ferociously as he believes this will choke off recovery. In general he favours further public sector spending to stimulate the global economy to ward off deflation while bearing in mind that banks may need another major injection of capital. He does however recognise that the US and UK for instance have limits as to how much they can increase their borrowing — so it would appear that the greatest onus will lie on other countries that have been more prudent.

He specifically points to China and the other major surplus countries as having an obligation — driven by self-interest — to stimulate their domestic consumption and increase their imports greatly. This would have the benefit of underpinning the value of the dollar whose collapse would hit the surplus countries’ reserves very hard (as they have few other options for investing these huge sums than the dollar). He rightly touches on the real likelihood of a new international reserve currency being created to replace the dollar — as the Chinese have already commented publicly in 2009.

This does presuppose that there are enough goods that they want to import from the weaker, largely Western economies and this must be a major question. Another question is whether major surplus countries like Germany and China would change course so radically as to turn their back on the accumulation of vast foreign currency surpluses. It may be good for them in the long run, but could it really happen? If there is not a collective agreement on the way forward and key countries decide to do what they believe is best for themselves individually, the risks are very high.

In the final chapter, ‘Saving Capitalism from Itself’, Bootle is sketchier and more speculative. It is as though he is outlining his next book. He scouts the separation of banks into investment banks and those doing more limited and boring while less risky activities. He outlines the case for better rather than more regulation, reviews the pros and cons of a Tobin tax, makes a splendid attack on the teaching and practice of economics and suggests how they should be reformed. In many ways this section deserves much longer treatment.

Bootle, provocative to the end, lists those he feels got it right both in general economic commentary and prediction and politically. He cites Keynes, Galbraith, Minsky, Stiglitz and Taleb amongst the economists, Mathir Mohammed of Malaysia and Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore of the political leaders. He gives some credit to the Chinese leadership while recognising some flaws and similarly applauds France’s suspicion of Anglo-Saxon finance capitalism but deplores its attitude to markets in general and to state spending and personal taxation.

Roger Bootle’s book is a highly important one, full of stimulating and enjoyable insights. He has proposed a series of measures to bring the crisis gradually to an end. Whether the international community can unite to implement them is another matter.

The Restoration of Maugham

Jeremy Lewis


Forty-five years after his death, Somerset Maugham is disregarded if not entirely forgotten. ‘Beloved by unliterary, unofficial, un-academic humanity,’ in the words of the American writer Glenway Westcott, ‘the mahatma of middlebrow culture’ was one of those rare writers who combined huge popular success — over ninety million copies of his books were sold in his lifetime — with literary reputation. ‘I have never pretended to be anything but a storyteller,’ Maugham once declared, and the reading public was happy to accept him as such. Fifty years ago, in the days of my youth, middle-class households with literary tastes invariably boasted a three-volume set of his short stories on their shelves; no writer has had more work made into films, although his own attempts to write for Hollywood ended in tears. By the end of his long life he had long been a national institution, his saurian features as instantly recognisable as those of his old
friend Winston Churchill.

And yet Maugham was never wholly admired or accepted by his fellow-writers, many of whom envied and despised his worldly success, and dismissed his work as well-made but lacking in depth and substance; and although Cyril Connolly in particular championed his writing, he was ignored by academic critics. One of the many virtues of Selina Hastings’s magnificent biography is that it should rekindle interest in a writer who combined elegant, pared-down prose with beady-eyed but compassionate insights into the human condition. And Maugham himself comes across as a likeable and sympathetic figure, a passionate, affectionate man who concealed his emotions behind a disconcerting mask of inscrutable reserve.

He was born in Paris in 1874: both his parents died young, and at the age of ten he was sent to live with his uncle in Whitstable. ‘I shall never forget the misery of those next few years,’ Maugham recalled: his uncle, a vicar, was a harsh and un congenial character, he missed his mother in particular, and he suffered from a stammer which was to blight him for the rest of his life. Lonely and friendless, he found that reading provided him ‘with a refuge from all the distress of life’, an ‘unreal world which would make the real world of every day a source of bitter disappointment’. He was educated at King’s School, Canterbury, and rather than follow his brothers to Cambridge, he trained as a doctor. He wrote once that ‘it is only by undergoing all varieties of human experience, however distressing some of them may be, that a writer can hope in the end perhaps to produce work of permanent value,’ and that ‘I learned pretty well everything I know about human nature in the five years I spent at St Thomas’s Hospital’.

He abandoned medicine after qualifying, but was to put his knowledge to good effect as a brave and considerate Red Cross volunteer on the Western Front.

Ambitious, diligent and self-disciplined, Maugham published his first novel, Liza of Lambeth, in 1897, and before long he was cultivating what the critic Desmond MacCarthy described as ‘the reserve and detachment of a professional man of letters’. He made his name as a novelist with Of Human Bondage, and earned a fortune as a fashionable playwright — according to MacCarthy, his plays ‘were just cynical enough to make the sentimental-worldly think themselves tough-minded while they were watching them, and just brilliant enough to satisfy a London audience’s far from exacting standard of wit.’ He played golf with Churchill, was taken up by society hostesses, and befriended H G Wells and Hugh Walpole, whom he compared to an ‘agitated guinea pig’ and ridiculed years later in Cakes and Ale.

Maugham’s love life was equally vigorous and varied. Beverley Nichols described Maugham as ‘the most sexually voracious’ man he’d ever known, and in the early years he divided his favours equally between men and women. The great love of his life, however, was Gerald Haxton, a heavy-drinking gambler who frittered away his life as Maugham’s social secretary. They met shortly before Maugham married the daughter of Dr Barnardo, who was already pregnant with his child and went on to become a fashionable interior director: Maugham grew to detest Syrie — ‘You have driven me to talk to you practically about nothing but frocks and furniture, and if you knew how sick I am of both these subjects!’ he once told her — but was heartbroken when Haxton died (‘For thirty years he has been my pleasure and my anxiety and without him I am lost and lonely and hopeless’).

‘I have had small power of imagination,’ Maugham once admitted. ‘I have taken living people and put them into the situations, tragic or comic, that their characters suggested. I might well say that they invented their own stories.’ His readiness to listen to other people, and his powers of observation, not only made him an excellent spy during the First World War, initially in Geneva and later in revolutionary Russia, but fuelled his genius as a short story writer. Logan Pearsall Smith described Maugham’s Malayan short stories as ‘ghastly betrayals of confidences, the publication of which has ruined the lives of the hosts who kindly entertained him in the East and confided in him the sad stories of their frustrated lives,’ but they constitute his finest work, and suited his modus operandi on the grounds that ‘it was very agreeable to live with the personages of my fancy for two or three weeks and then be done with them’.

Maugham spent much of each year moving restlessly about the world, gathering material as he went, but in 1926 he acquired the Villa Mauresque on Cap Ferrat, where he entertained a small army of friends, lovers and hangers-on, from Wells and Churchill to Arthur Marshall, Beverley Nichols and Godfrey Winn: he was a generous host, and Selina Hastings vividly evokes his life in the south of France, devoted as it was to an enviable combination of worldly pleasures and writerly discipline. Eager to do his bit at the outbreak of war, he was sent to America to promote British interests. His later years make melancholy reading: although Haxton’s replacement, Alan Searle, was devoted to his master, he detested Maugham’s family, and his daughter Liza in particular, and did all he could to stir up trouble. Selina Hastings describes the vicissitudes of Maugham’s life with an appropriate mixture of affection and objectivity, and because — unlike so many modern biographers — she takes the trouble to build up her subsidiary characters, her book has the richness and pace of a novel. She has done the old boy proud.
One of the many paradoxes touched on by Richard Overy in this fascinating cultural study of inter-war Britain is the very different lessons Britain and Germany drew from their common experience in the First World War.

In Britain, a hard-won victory led to the rise of a popular mood of pacifism: a generalised feeling that this really had been ‘the war to end all war’ in Lloyd George’s glib phrase, and that there had to be a better way to resolve conflicts and end international disputes. This ‘peace at any price’ attitude manifested itself in support for such outfits as the Peace Pledge Union, and the League of Nations; as well as to a running down of the armed forces — (development of the tank, for example, a war-winning British invention, was virtually abandoned and inexplicably largely left to Germany who responded with the Blitzkrieg) — and widespread sentimental sympathy for the beaten enemy.

Germany, in stark contrast, despite the horrendous losses of the war, reacted by firstly denying defeat — the ‘Dolchstosslegende’ — or ‘Stab in the back myth’ — which led to the rise of the Nazis determined to reverse the results of the world war round one. Any hint of German pacifism — such as Erich Maria Remarque’s All Quiet on the Western Front was ruthlessly stamped on. Although Overy is, I would guess, on the Left politically, and should in theory approve of pacifism, his honesty as a historian compels him to conclude that Britain’s embrace of the idea, going all the way up to the supposedly Tory Prime Ministers Baldwin and Chamberlain (neither of whom had fought in the war) refusing to re-arm in face of the blatant threat from Hitler, was a disaster that almost cost us the war.

Pacifism is just one of many ideas, cults and currents examined by Overy in his extremely wide-ranging and informative book. He also looks at the Birth Control movement founded by the demonically energetic and fearless, but rather sinister Marie Stopes; psychoanalysis; the impact of popular science; and individual intellectuals such as the historian Arnold Toynbee, the dreadful Fabian-Stalinist harridan Beatrice Webb, and various left-wing causes ranging from the Jarrow Crusade against unemployment to the Communist-orchestrated support for the Republic in the Spanish Civil War.

As this left-leaning list makes clear, the book’s subtitle is a misnomer, since the ideas and causes under examination are almost wholly leftist ones. Oswald Mosley’s Blackshirts, for instance, are only present as targets for left-wing groups to agitate against. There is no attempt to explain why Mosley drew so much support; nor, if radical Marxism was all the rage, why Britain was run for most of the period by Conservative or Tory-dominated National governments elected with sweeping majorities.

Almost despite himself, Overy reveals the dark side of the Left’s enthusiasms. Take eugenics, for instance, a cause much admired by ‘progressives’ like Marie Stopes (when her son married a spectacle-wearing woman, she cut him off without a penny on the grounds that he was polluting the Stopian genes with a defect). Fabian socialists such as the Webbs, H G Wells and that appalling old windbag G B Shaw were also mustard-keen eugenicists. Their mania for cleaning up the inherent chaos of life and bossing the lower orders about brought them very close to supporting organised mass murder. The line between Auschwitz and Hampstead is revealed here as disappearingly thin.

Since the Left, who had striven since Marx to convert their often cracked theories into scientific laws, liked to harness technology and the laboratory to their bandwagons, it is interesting to see the genetic inheritance of a typical ‘progressive’ family: the Toynbees. Old Arnold, a Spenglerian historian of a distinctly doom-laden cast, forever foretelling the demise of civilisation, begat Philip, a journalist, Communist and drunk; who begat Polly the vinegary weathercock Cassandra of today’s Guardian. The follies of the Left, though demonstrated in each generation, have it seems to be re-learned ever anew.

Pacifism is also stripped naked as intellectually bereft in the face of Hitler’s ugly reality. It is no accident that the extremes of left and ultra right finally met just before the war in Mosley’s campaign for a peace deal with Nazi Germany: that was the logical outcome of the Left’s ‘No War’ position. Overy’s over-arching thesis is that inter-war Britain was in the grip of a morbid death wish. This was manifested in everything from the dystopian fiction of Aldous Huxley, to the pessimistic prophecies of his scientist brother Julian. For a society that had lived for two decades crouching in terror that ‘the bomber’ as Baldwin put it ‘will always get through’ the dreaded Second war, when it finally came, and terrible though it was, must have been a blessed relief. As another famous Thirties figure put it, ‘The only thing they had to fear was fear itself’.

The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars, Richard Overy, Allen Lane, 2009, £25.00.

Overy and Out
Nigel Jones

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Good books about politics, particularly about socialism, are seldom written by professional historians and never by ‘political scientists’. The best people to write such books are natural scientists. Of course, my view may be partly because I myself have written quite a few books about socialism, being a biologist by profession. Yet, it is undeniable that the best works on Communism — from Solzhenitsyn’s Gulag Archipelago to Orwell’s 1984 — were written by anyone but historians; and quite a few of them were written by biologists.

Politics in general and Communism in particular are very much about deception and manipulation; so one needs a cold, sceptical mind to analyse it without being influenced. With history (and ‘humanities’ in general), nothing can be exactly measured or weighed. Consequently, few things are ever quite proved or disproved among historians. The pluralism of various theories reigns, and alas, too many historians become hostages of their own theories. Natural science is much more ruthless: a result of one experiment may ruin the most elegant theory, a product of someone’s life work, more ruthless: a result of one experiment may ruin the most elegant theory, a product of someone’s life work, along with a brilliant scientific career of its author. We scientists have always been taught — and got used to — strict, pure analysis without fear or favour.

The Triumph of Provocation by Jozef Mackiewicz is an excellent example of such political analysis by a biologist. It is much better written than most historians’ books: authors with clear minds tend to write clear texts. One reason why this book should become compulsory reading for every student of modern history is that it would teach them to think about their subject, unlike many books on their reading lists which only teach to juggle quotations and apply well-balanced double standards.

Mackiewicz himself makes many perceptive points about this:

...all knowledge about the past of Communism is being, so to speak, officially forgotten. During the peak of the Cold War, one could have compared Stalin to Hitler, but never the other way around. Had one said that Stalin was always worse than Hitler, one would have turned upside down the whole hierarchy of saints and devils in the new chronology, and the whole meaning of the last war and of the postwar arrangements would have been thrown into question.

And so one is allowed to blame Stalin for the treaty with Hitler, but it is unthinkable to blame Hitler for the treaty with Stalin; it is permissible to compare Soviet labour camps with Hitler’s concentration camps, but the reverse comparison is unthinkable.

But there is more in this book than just an unbiased view of the well-known events and criticism of ‘mainstream’ historians. His dispassionately scientific approach allows Mackiewicz to penetrate dark corners of history not brought to the attention of modern readers by anyone else. How the Bolsheviks won the Civil War in Russia by skilfully playing Russian, Polish, Ukrainian and Lithuanian nationalists against each other. How the double standards towards Nazism and Communism were forced on the war-time Resistance in East Europe, eventually neutralising the threat it posed to the Soviet Empire. How the Western intellectuals accepted the same double standards and thus became Communist fellow travellers: the other side of the notorious events, forgotten today because it did not fit into ‘mainstream’ historical theories.

The Triumph of Provocation is not so much about the Communists’ wickedness as about the anti-Communists’ follies. The author clearly finds it rather pointless to criticise the enemy for being the enemy. Moreover, Mackiewicz pays little attention to the usual suspects, the Kerensky-style pinkie fellow travellers. What concerned him were the faults of the genuine patriots and anti-Communists, those who made their mistakes in good faith and would try and avoid repeating them in the future. So we learn about the mistakes made by real heroes of the Cold War such as the Polish post-WWII Resistance leaders; and can appreciate the sophistication of Soviet tricks, to which nobody ever could be quite immune.

In this sense, it is important that this book is written by a Pole, who naturally pays most attention to the history of his own nation. Throughout the Cold War, Poland resisted Communism valiantly, more valiantly perhaps than any other nation on earth. If you are talking about the faults of Russians, Americans, or Jews in dealing with Communism, you inevitably face that silly explanation that they made all their mistakes just because they were Russians, Americans or Jews. With Poles, this cannot be said; and yet, we find that Poles made all the same mistakes with all the same tragic consequences. Humans are humans everywhere, and there was no God-chosen nation immune to Communist provocations.

Of course, much has changed in the world since The Triumph of Provocation was first published in the 1960s. Some of the book’s predictions have long come true; some of its boldest analysis has become obvious and almost trivial. Unfortunately, Mackiewicz’s
attempts to update the book since then were hardly successful: the later amendments lack the same depth and clarity of analysis, which are the main virtues of the original text. Thus, he seems deeply sceptical about the dissident movements in the socialist world, such as the Polish ‘Solidarity’ or human rights movement in the Soviet Union, and views them as little more than a product of another Communist machination. One wonders what he would have said if he had lived long enough to see those movements’ triumph over Communism, in spite of the world’s effort to save it.

Nevertheless those few points where he was wrong are easy to see; and many more of those where he was right are still relevant. The world has learnt too little, and forgotten too much, in the decades that passed since this book was written. Even now, few people want to know much about the Cold War — because if they do, they will have to learn some inconvenient lessons. And those who want to know can hardly find the truth in all the countless, well-balanced and tedious volumes written by historians. It is to those readers that Mackiewicz’s book will be useful.

**Words of a Feather**

_Celia Haddon_


Enthusiasts, according to the ancient Greeks, were persons who were god-possessed. Jeremy Mynott is a man possessed and impassioned by birds. He does not breed them or study their ethology but watches them. However, unlike many enthusiasts and obsessives, Mynott is conscious of and can reflect upon his own behaviour, as well as having an extensive knowledge of English literature (as it relates to birds, of course).

Starting with swallows in Shingle Street, near his home in Suffolk, and ending with the Wompoo pigeon of Australia, Mynott moves through the meaning of ‘jizz’ (the distinctive aspects of a bird), pauses to note that Jane Eyre was reading Bewick’s _History of British Birds_ and gives us Sir Thomas Browne’s description of a dead roller in his 1668 manuscript, _Notes on Certain Birds Found in Norfolk_. _Birdscapes_ is an extraordinary compilation of anecdotes and literary references collected and recollected and reflected upon in tranquillity. It throws light not so much on the wild birds themselves, but the human relationship with them.

Take lists, like that of Sir Thomas Browne. Other lists include Thomas Jefferson’s list of birds in the state of Virginia (many of them taken from an earlier naturalist) and the Northamptonshire list compiled by the poet John Clare with some of the local names such as sooty swallow (swift), pettichap (chiffchaff), silk tail (waxwing) and bumbarrel (long-tailed tit). Mynott has compiled his own humorous list of bird-watching behaviour, ranging from watching passively from a chair to what he calls ‘the full-blown Messiah complex’ of finding a species new to science.

Then he pauses to reflect that the human habit of list making is perhaps a way of taking possession not unlike hunting or collecting. In the light of this, we may understand, as Mynott does, twitchers, those bird obsessives that do not want to spend too much time actually watching the birds, preferring merely to have seen them, noted them and listed them.

Obsessives like Roger Peterson, a compiler of various bird guides, can be totally single-minded. On one famous occasion Peterson was accompanying a party of bigwigs, including Lord Alanbrooke, chief of general staff during World War Two, on a bird trip. Alanbrooke was enthralling the others with details of his relationship with Winston Churchill. Peterson just waited for a gap in the conversation and inserted: ‘I guess oystercatchers will eat most any kind of mollusc.’

Birds have inspired not just lists but some good poetry like Keat’s _Ode to a Nightingale_, or the many poems about birds written by John Clare. Clare said of Keats, ‘as is the case with other inhabitants of great cities, he often described nature as she appeared to his fancies and not as he would have described her had he witnessed the things he described.’ This prompts the thought that perhaps Keats had never really heard a nightingale.

Mynott also pursues another intriguing nightingale moment — the iconic BBC recording of Beatrice Harrison playing a cello in the woods, (wearing her best concert frock even though it was for radio), and accompanied by a living nightingale. Was the bird really responding to her music or had a sceptical BBC producer lined up a bird impressionist to make the nightingale song? Mynott sleuths madly in all directions, tracking down relatives of a famous bird impressionist, who did bird imitations for music halls, sending the recordings to experts to analyse and then somewhat abruptly moves off into whether an eighth century riddle poem is also really about a nightingale. It’s that sort of book.

Another detection byway, that of identifying a location from an account of the birds found there, takes him to the Anglo-Saxon narrative poem _The Seafarer_. He reports that ornithologist James Fisher not only translated the relevant passage, which mentions
swans, gannets, whimbrels and kittiwakes, but from it concluded that the poet was writing of Bass Rock, in East Lothian. Moreover Fisher gave the year, AD 685, and the dates, April 20th to 27th, the time of year when the whooper swans are passing north.

Some people don’t notice birds much at all. Mynott notices them everywhere. Thus he gives us not just an account of what birds are available at Delphi in Greece but a special birders’ map of where to look for them. (Next time I am there I must keep an eye out for the Rippell’s warbler.) This of course leads to the role of birds in augury and the Homeric eagle with a snake in its talons that appeared before Hector’s attack on the Greek ships. The eagle drops the snake among the Trojans, foreshadowing the failure of the Trojan attack.

Here is almost everything that you might ever want to know about birds in Western culture. For instance, Mynott pauses to remark that there would be a stampede of twitchers if a North American bluebird really was spotted over the white cliffs of Dover. And yet because Mynott writes so well, he never bores. This is an engaging and amusing book, even if you are not a bird lover.

Has Roy been in?

James Hughes-Onslow


In the summer of 1985 a small bald man wearing a brown suit and a pork pie hat and carrying a huge plastic bag knocked on my door in Camberwell, south London. It was Roy Kerridge, then a columnist on The Spectator, and he had dropped in unannounced (but not unwelcomed) for tea. He was doing one of his inimitable surveys, finding out how local people felt about the recent riots in Brixton. As his bag, which contained books, papers, notes and food, was in a sorry state of repair, he hung it on a door handle and, taking a new one from his pocket, demonstrated how he could slip it under the old one without emptying the contents on the floor. Roy got on well with our son Andrew, then aged four months, and they exchanged meaningful gurgling noises. To this day, whenever I see Roy, he asks what Andrew is doing these days. Roy also asked whether I knew anyone in The Swan pub opposite Stockwell tube station. He had a lot of friends in there, he explained. Although I’ve never been into The Swan, I often imagine a crowd of smiling Caribbean faces calling ‘anyone seen Roy?’ Although Roy is white, he often says that most of his friends are black. I mention all this because I think it is the key to how he writes but with sharp and observational skills. He moves from one group of friends to the next, although they often have no connection between them. Many of the characters in his novels are based on his vast diaspora of relations, most of them very odd. He lives in a world peopled with such characters as a Methodist minister from Sierra Leone, the Rev Sidbury-Wellings, and W L Earnshaw who hails from Southend-on-Sea but has connections with Chief Kwango from Zululand. It’s all rather reminiscent of Beachcomber’s Dr Strabismus of Utrecht who eats spaghetti through a tuba, or Peter Simple’s J Bonnington Jagworth, but occasionally real people such as Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky and later in the story Michael Ivens and John Freeman, intrude rather shockingly into the narrative.

Although this book, Triumphs of Communism, has a misleadingly ponderous title, it sparkles with crazy observations starting with a description of King Christian IX of Denmark, an elderly bewhiskered man, looking through shop windows in Copenhagen in 1894. I was hoping to learn here that Roy, like Hamlet, was a descendant of the King of Denmark; perhaps with a claim to the throne, but sadly, like so much in this book, this turns out to be a red herring. A few pages later we are in Russian Poland where we meet Adolf Frankel, aged seven, probably Roy’s grandfather, living in a big house surrounded by pear and cherry orchards. Adolf attended boarding school in German Poland and was forbidden at school to speak any language except German, which he did not know. He had no religion, for his father laughed openly at the Orthodox Church to which he nominally (and secretly fearfully) belonged. To Adolf, Jews, with their strange beards, were as alien as Christians, but not so frightening. No one in the Frankel family, whatever their official beliefs, could regard any Christian church with anything but horror. Folk memories of pogroms were strong and Christianity was the murderer who struck by night. His mother’s hampers, full of delicious food from the estate, enabled young Adolf to bribe the other boys into doing his schoolwork. Then we’re off to New York, Vladivostok, Manchuria and Switzerland. In Copenhagen Adolf worked for one of Lenin’s henchmen but also met his wife Magda: ‘Marriage is for the bourgeoisie, but we belong together. Would you link your life to a Communist? When the war is over, we shall travel. I shall take you to Paris.’ All the children were clever, passed exams, won scholarships and did well.

The heroine of this book is Adolf and Magda’s daughter Thea who, I suspect, is Roy’s mother. After making money in Bakelite in Manchester, the family
had moved to Kensington, which Magda detested because the people were so snooty but where Thea was happy at Norland Place, a private school where girls were prepared for Queen Charlotte’s Ball. Then there was another family upheaval. Thea’s brother Stanislaus contracted TB and they moved first to Bexhill for the sea air, and then to a Polish forest on the banks of the river Vistula. Magda did not care for forest life. She had been horrified, on her first sight of the house, to find that her pillow and bedsheet were covered in black treacle slime. A servant lit the lamp, and the slime suddenly separated into twenty thousand individual bedbugs, who glided over the sheets in an instant and disappeared into cracks in the wall. Frankel Enterprises made four different MacBaines’ Pastes out of the same essence of fish offal, fit for human consumption if kept in a cool place. Adolf called the paste MacBaines because it sounded honest, cunningly illustrated with pictures of salmon, hens, cows and crabs. When the police arrived the firm had been closed for two years and Frankel told them to take pastes to the station for their tea. Then followed the North Wembley era. ‘Capitalism is a machine’, Adolf grew fond of saying. ‘It works very well for a while, but every now and then it breaks. One day it will break forever and, out of chaos and starvation, Communism will follow. My task is to make enough money to keep all the family alive over the period of chaos.’

Thea was becoming a Communist and a linguist, and spoke with a real French accent, unrecognised by her teacher. Later, on a school holiday in Paris, Thea proved to be the only one in the party who could understand what the Parisians were saying and she acted as interpreter for the five teachers who accompanied the class. Thea and a friend went to the East End to see the proletariat. They would know them by their huge bodies, muscular arms and small heads, as well as by the swirling banners they always carried. At Billingsgate, they stopped and stared, for muscular men hurried to and fro with huge fishy baskets on their heads. Were these the proletariat?

Meanwhile, there was mayhem in Thea’s beloved Communist Party of North Wembley. No one could explain why Russia, as well as Germany, had invaded Poland, so this confusing fact had to be glossed over. At Aberystwyth University, where she distributed the Daily Worker, Thea didn’t quite understand wartime food shortages. She left one egg in too long, another too short, a third got confused, and soon the kitchen began to fill with wasted broken eggs. Thea eventually met a boy who appeared to be a landed gent much to her mother’s delight and after she became pregnant, they were persuaded to marry in Glasgow just before he was sent overseas on war service. Thus was Roy Kerridge brought into the world with a rich legacy to write about. The book certainly shows the strange misconceptions that immigrants have about English life but if it doesn’t quite hang together as a major drama, it may be something to do with Roy’s peripatetic plastic bag lifestyle. Perhaps what he needs is a firm editor with colossal resources of patience.

**Ritual Conflicts**

**Jules Stewart**


In 1991, Africa witnessed the beginning of one of the most gruesome civil conflicts to have ravaged the continent since the end of the Second World War, when European powers began abandoning colonial role. Sierra Leone is one of the world’s poorest nations, ranking seventh lowest on the Human Poverty Index, and the country suffers from alarming level of endemic corruption. Dr Nathalie Wlodarczyk, Deputy Director of Global Forecasting at the intelligence company Exclusive Analysis, has put together the history of this eleven-year war and in particular the use of magic as practised by the Kamajors, the secret society that played a key role in the fighting.

Wlodarczyk lived in Sierra Leone gathering material for her book; hence the finished product has a much wider appeal than an academic treatise. It was not until the break-up of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War that the West began to notice what was happening in Africa in any meaningful way. ‘In the 1990s Africa therefore came to represent war,’ says Wlodarczyk, ‘but also apparent chaos as it seemed as though the removal of superpower support for ideologically driven proxy wars had instead unleashed a return to primitive tribal wars.’

The Western powers, in particular the US, had almost nothing that could be called a foreign policy to deal with these countries. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, deployed a very definite policy aimed at expanding its influence in Africa, while Washington basically adopted a defensive role, dancing to the tune that Moscow played. Britain, which along with France had been the dominant colonial power, was bullied into giving up its African possessions in the 1960s on the back of international ‘anti-colonialism’ movements, fuelled by student protests that rampaged across the U.S. campuses, with Washington’s tacit blessing. It could be argued that had Britain resisted pressure to
abandon its African colonies they might have stood some chance of developing the stability needed for self-government to function. After all, the scramble for Africa did not begin until the 1880s and Britain had ruled Sierra Leone for less than a century. Compare this with India, which benefited from more than 300 years of British rule. Had it not been for the tradition of civil administration and infrastructure imposed on India, the sub-continent might today be a vast Afghanistan.

The withdrawal of Britain and France from Africa left their former colonies unprepared for self-rule. By the 1990s, at least fourteen of these newly-independent states were engulfed in civil wars and in none was the killing and brutality carried out at more shocking levels than in Sierra Leone.

The timeline follows the usual dismal pattern of violence and chaos. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launched their insurgency in 1991, with the connivance of Liberia which saw an opportunity to lay its hands on Sierra Leone’s fabulous diamond mines, whose production at one point was valued at up to $100 million a year. The National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) overthrew the government the following year and in 1996 Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was elected president. Kabbah was ousted a year later and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) seized power. Kabbah was reinstated in 1998, the AFRC and RUF ransacked Freetown in 1999, leaving thousands dead, a peace deal was finally signed under UN auspices and in 2002 Kabbah was once more back in power. Kabbah was reinstated in 1998, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) overthrew the government. But in Sierra Leone the diamond trade turned to cocaine production to subsidise their war against the government. But in Sierra Leone the diamond trade supported the conflicts in Angola, Congo and Sierra Leone, just as the FARC guerrillas of Colombia turned to cocaine production to subsidise their war against the government. But in Sierra Leone the diamond trade was the domain of the corrupt elite and their patron-client relationships. As regards the foot soldier resentful of his alienation and misery, ‘tapping into the beliefs of the local population and securing the support of key spiritual leaders can aid in the mobilisation and recruitment effort of a group,’ explains Wlodarczyk. Young recruits are assured by their witch doctors through immunisation rituals that ‘bullets turn into water or miss their targets, soldiers become invincible and occasionally acquire supernatural powers such as flying or making themselves invisible’. And they believe it, and go to their deaths by the thousands. These deadly superstitions are not the sole domain of the ignorant. Macias Nguema, the first president of the former Spanish territory of Equatorial Guinea, was one of the most corrupt and dictatorial leaders in post-colonial African history. Macias was overthrown and sentenced to death in 1979. The night before his execution by firing squad, a young soldier who served him his last meal said Macias had told him he was not afraid because his magical powers would deflect the bullets.

Key players in the Sierra Leone war were the Kamajors, traditional hunters from the Mende ethnic group. They were used by Kabbah in 1996 to replace foreign mercenaries as the government’s security force, called the Civil Defence Forces (CDF). It has been widely reported that the insurgents’ signature terror tactic was physical mutilation. An estimated 20,000 civilians suffered amputation, with machetes and axes being used to sever arms, legs, lips, and ears. RUF members would often destroy villages and kill most of their inhabitants, while some were mutilated and sent to neighbouring villages as a warning. The Kamajors, though fighting for the elected government, were no strangers to ritualistic murder. Wlodarczyk interviewed a number of Kamajor ex-combatants who were unsurprisingly at pains to dispute the media reports of barbaric practices in battle. ‘There were also ritualistic elements to the fighting,’ she says, ‘and behaviour engaged in by the Kamajors during or after battle, that appear to have been more of an echo of organised ritual than actual orthodox practice. Acts of cannibalism and ritualistic killings are the most striking of these ‘echoes’’. Nevertheless, Wlodarczyk points out that these practices have been documented. ‘Kamajor fighters on several occasions dismembered enemy victims and ingested parts of their bodies – particularly the heart and liver. The symbolism of the practice — or the tradition echoed — is the acquisition of power through ingestion.’

Wlodarczyk’s book goes far beyond the recounting of a ghastly African civil war and its necrophiliac practices. These rituals have become a common feature of African warfare and here we are given an authoritative insight into the use of magical beliefs and the need to understand them. ‘Religious belief systems of any kind sit uncomfortably in political science and even more so in strategic studies,’ says Wlodarczyk. The challenge, she says, is to understand the means-end process and connect this with supposedly irrational influences. We must identify the instrumental rationality — or function — of allegedly irrational activities. ‘Without incorporating the influence of these activities into our theories about war they will inevitably be less useful as tools that explain or even direct warfare.’
Spain: the Untold World War II Campaign
Mark Baillie


Jimmy Burns describes for the first time a top-secret World War II campaign of bribery and propaganda that, with Churchill’s blessing, kept Franco in power to secure Spanish neutrality and protect Allied strategic interests in southern Europe and North Africa: if we had lost Gibraltar we would have lost the war.

Trying to keep Kim Philby off his back in London and fighting for influence against the Germans in Spain, his father Tom Burns was involved in some of the more colourful episodes of World War II, entrapping German agents, thwarting a Nazi attempt to kidnap the Duke of Windsor in Spain and recruiting several unusual British agents such as the romantic Hollywood actor Leslie Howard.

After five years of interviews and probing family papers, classified government documents and other previously unexamined archives, the author found that his father was at the heart of the Allies’ intelligence and propaganda operations in Madrid, Lisbon, Gibraltar and Tangier.

The son, like most people, knew Tom Burns best as the publisher of Belloc, Chesterton, Waugh, Greene and other Roman Catholic writers before and after the war and as editor of The Tablet for much of the rest of his life. This, however, was central to his life as an intelligence officer, using the school and intellectual friends he had made among the Spanish aristocracy (then rather pro-British and keen to send their children to the Jesuits at Stonyhurst College) and literary world.

Like many in the British literary world, including Graham Greene, he was recruited by the Ministry of Information, the propaganda department of the war effort. He was, of course, immediately suspect to most literati because he was on the wrong side in the Spanish Civil War, driving ambulances for the Nationalists he had actually met Philby when the Soviet agent was The Times correspondent in Spain.

Burns’s role in Spain was to recruit agents of influence, not spies who hand over information but people who can put one’s point of view to decision-makers and suppress other points of view. This involved a mixture of personal diplomacy by Burns and gigantic bribes to Spanish generals (although not Franco) from the intelligence service. The bribes have been mentioned before but they merit a whole book to themselves, as do many aspects of the intelligence war in Spain, not least the German side: it is probably the only pure intelligence campaign of World War II, with not a shot fired, certainly the only one of such strategic importance in hostile territory (with due respect for the British campaign of influence in the USA that was far more important and maybe even more devious).

Anyone with a working knowledge of World War II will have some idea of what happened in every country, obviously North Africa, Egypt and Libya but even Greece and Turkey, maybe even Lebanon and Syria where French fought French. Then there is Spain: a huge gap in our history of the war, yet sitting on Gibraltar, whose motto Mons Calpe describes exactly what it is, the key mountain, the key to the Mediterranean. Without Gibraltar, the Royal Navy would have lost control of the Mediterranean and there would have been no access to oil and no shortcut to the Far East, no siege of Malta, no El Alamein, no US invasion of North Africa and no invasion of Italy. With access to oil, the Germans could have won the war or certainly prolonged it much further, perhaps to a ceasefire.

The mystery is why Franco did not hand Gibraltar to Hitler, to whom he was so greatly in debt for his help in the Civil War. That, too, is a book that remains to be written and it must include the instability of a barely pacified and utterly shattered country; Franco’s nationalism and pride, far more important than any political notions such as Fascism; his fear of foreign invasion of any kind (the Germans would have had to move overland, even if a first strike were carried out by paratroops as in Crete); the likely loss of the Canaries to the Allies; his caution, waiting to see which way the wind might blow; and many things that demand more research. One reviewer has mocked this book for not being proper history, not describing the work of the head intelligence officer and others in Madrid, but it is not a history, it is a biography: it touches on many important events but the story is the life and loves of Tom Burns, including a personal introduction to this hitherto obscure campaign. Indeed, the author also does not give enough weight to the importance of Gibraltar but he has broken new ground in the National Archive at Kew, the files of the intelligence services, the Royal Archives in Seville and the Franco family’s private documents.
Roger Scruton is both a philosopher and a musician, so that it is with great interest that we pick up his latest book. Rather than a monolithic tome, it is a neat volume of essays; the first part, ‘Aesthetics’ covers an investigation into what exactly music is and the second, ‘Criticism’, a selection of musical criticism and analysis, covers such diverse topics as Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Scriabin, Szymanowski, Janacek, Schoenberg and Adorno.

This is not a book for those seeking to learn what sonata form is. Scruton is intent on digging deeper than that. The first six essays follow on from his book The Aesthetics of Music and in them Scruton seeks to establish exactly what we mean by music, what it means to understand music, how we perceive that music expresses emotion and how it is that we can say that music moves when in physical terms no movement takes place. I found the discourses thought provoking and, whilst I cannot imagine how I could apply the knowledge to my own writing of music, the scientist in me was fascinated by Scruton’s examination of the underlying fabric of our musical thoughts.

In the second half, Scruton mixes criticism with analysis and philosophical investigations. In his preface Scruton says that

In the first part of this book I summarise and take forward the argument of ‘The Aesthetics of Music’. In the second part I apply that argument to modern music, adding some thoughts on Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner.

I have not read The Aesthetics of Music and I could find less connection between the two parts of the book than Scruton implies. In the second half, the criticism is pretty traditional analysis, except that Scruton writes from the point of view of a philosopher who sees the world in a more precise way than we ordinary folk.

Therefore the book, though comprehensible, requires some effort from the average reader. I am a composer and not well versed in philosophy and it took me some time to get used to the language and grammar of Scruton’s arguments in part 1. A glossary of terms would have been useful; not only do we have to get used to such new words as ‘acousmatic’ but we have to cope with existing words used in new, precise ways. A good example is the opening sentence of chapter 2, ‘Sounds’. Sounds are like secondary qualities in that their nature is bound up with the way they are perceived. However, they are not qualities either of the objects that emit them or of the regions of space in which they are heard.

There is nothing here which is impossible, but it does require some thought and the application of a rather precise mind-set.

Once you get past this, the first six chapters are a challenging and exciting ride as Scruton forces you to re-consider exactly what it means to hear a melody or recognise rhythm. He has a wide grasp of music and includes references to classical and popular, rock and jazz. Though contemporary music comes into the spectrum as well, one of the aspects of Scruton’s world view is his mistrust of serialism and the 12-tone system. And one of his overarching arguments is the way that the tonal system (or modified tonal system) threads its way naturally through Scruton’s definitions of music.

He writes magisterially. When giving an opinion or dismissing a counter argument, you feel that unless you are as eminent a philosopher as Scruton, there is no room for argument. He sometimes dismisses counter-arguments so brusquely that I was inclined to wonder at how others might consider his argument. However the book comes copiously annotated, so the interested reader, their curiosity piqued, could dig further into this complex subject.

After the challenges of part 1, I found the musical criticism itself something of a let-down. Not that there is anything wrong with Scruton’s examination of Mozart and the reasons why he is so special or THE lucid explanation of the underlying meanings of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. But having found myself challenged in part 1, I wanted the criticism to stretch me more. In musical analysis Scruton is rather fond of dissecting a phrase into keys, key-relationships, which I do not always find helpful and would be tricky for non-practising musicians.

Inevitably his two chapters on Wagner’s Ring mix philosophy and musical analysis. It is difficult to do justice to Wagner and the Ring in 40 pages, but Scruton gives it a pretty good go. And his examination of the debt that Szymanowski owed to Scriabin is interesting enough, but in his examination of King Roger, Scruton seems to have missed the effect that Szymanowski’s own conflicted sexuality had on the work.

Scruton’s thoughts on Schoenberg and Janacek as teachers are interesting. Here he is not dealing with musical criticism or analysis, but in the effects that the two had on subsequent musical history. He gives a lucid explanation of how Janacek’s distinctive technique effectively renewed tonality but was firmly rooted in his local world, whereas Schoenberg sought to be more
judging by this book and his record he is a natural
development in Economics. He is not known to me personally but
his work, reflected in one of the chapters in this book, is devoted to rejecting
the proposition that economic success makes people happier. The more irreverent are, therefore, likely to
turn to this book with interest and expectation.

For much of the book they will not be disappointed.
Mishan is not afraid to cross polite opinion. Indeed
he gives every sign of attacking consensus views with
particular relish. The most significant chapters in this book
deal with the myths (as Mishan sees it) that ‘Immigrant Labour Confers Economic Benefits on the Host Country’,
‘Rent Controls are Necessary during a Housing Shortage’ and ‘The Fact that Women’s Earnings are Significantly Below Those of Men is Evidence of Discrimination’. In the first mentioned chapter he has no hesitation in
pointing out the extra costs large scale immigration cause in respect, inter alia, of the maintenance of a race-relations industry, in training police officers and other officials in
discrimination law, in interpreters, in schools where many pupils do not speak English and in respect of anti-terror
measures to combat malign intentions in part of the recent immigrant population.

Readers, however, ought not to assume that the whole book will prove equally congenial to those on the Right.
Other ‘fallacies’ investigated with equal decisiveness are ‘Countries Forming a Common Market Reap Economic Benefits’, ‘A Competitive Private Enterprise Economy Tends to Produce Economic Efficiency’ and ‘Inflation is Caused by an Excessive Increase in the Supply of Money’. Some of Mishan’s chapters are more successful
than others, but they all deserve careful reading. Among
the most immediately pertinent is his chapter opposing
the proposition that ‘A Subsidy to University Education is Justified...’ Here he applies standard economic logic
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even taking another view of the purpose of university
education subsidies are still undesirable.

This is all good, carefully argued stuff, though in
some cases the counter arguments to Mishan’s line seem
stronger. However, it is good that someone properly
trained in the discipline of economics is prepared to even
question the greatest orthodoxies of the day. We could
all do with having our deeply rooted beliefs challenged
from time to time. The book would make an excellent
present for a curious teenager becoming interested in
politics and economics.

Economic Consequences
Richard Packer


Economics seems easy but it is not. Much can be confusing. Sometimes the doctrines we apply in
everyday life, for example the advantages of balancing budgets and spending less than you earn, when applied
on a larger stage work just fine, but sometimes they do not.
Certainly the application of what seems simple
common sense to macroeconomics did not always lead
happy outcomes. Every new A Level student learns
how the extraction of vast amounts of money (gold and silver) from Latin America by the Spanish of the 16th
and 17th centuries did them little economic good. Later
those who adopted free trade, in effect giving something
(a bargaining counter) away, regarded by everyone
beforehand as ludicrous, did surprisingly well.

The basic difficulty has long been recognised; in
economics, as a teacher of mine put it, ‘everything
affects everything else’. Or in other words actions
affect the prevailing equilibrium (including incentives and expectations) and the final position may be far
removed from that envisaged by the actor. Unlike in the
natural sciences everything not studied cannot be held
constant. A consequence is that in economics acting with
goodwill is not enough. Before advocating a course of
action thought and perhaps study are required else one
might recommend a course of action likely to lead to
an undesirable outcome. All this consistently proves too
difficult for some of our more cognitively challenged
and/or lazy commentators, who persist in advocating
courses likely to achieve the opposite of what they want.

This complex state of affairs is tailor-made for
E J Mishan, a former professor at the London School of Economics. He is not known to me personally but
judging by this book and his record he is a natural

iconoclast, both amused and appalled by human folly
and obstinacy, who delights in dissecting the more
thoughtless suggestions of those with the temerity
to make proposals without having the knowledge
to see where they must lead. Mishan does not have
orthodox views. His best-known work, reflected in
one of the chapters in this book, is devoted to rejecting
the proposition that economic success makes people
happier. The more irreverent are, therefore, likely to
turn to this book with interest and expectation.

For much of the book they will not be disappointed.
Mishan is not afraid to cross polite opinion. Indeed
he gives every sign of attacking consensus views with
particular relish. The most significant chapters in this book
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The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (1943)
Katharine Szamuely

The title of this film is confusing. It suggests a lampooning satire, a ferocious attack on the stupidity of the armed forces. This is not what you would expect from the writing and directing team Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, but at first this seems about right. We find out that a group of young soldiers have decided to win an exercise by breaking the rules and kidnapping General Wynne-Candy (played by Roger Livesey; he has by this stage advanced beyond a Colonel and is not at any stage called Blimp). This outrages various members of authority, who seem to see fighting a war along the lines of playing cricket, with breaking rules as more heinous than losing to Germany. When the soldiers break in on Wynne-Candy in the Turkish baths they laugh at what they see as the pomposity of the old, at which point he tells them the story of his army career.

Wynne-Candy is an idealist without the sense to see when those ideals are going to lead to trouble. He goes to Germany on a whim before the First World War to tell people not to be nasty to the British. He gets lost at all the key moments, and it is not clear if he has ever achieved anything that can really be said to have helped the war effort. At the end of the First World War he and his fellow British officers drag a German to their celebratory dinner to tell him that everything will be fine for him, and cannot understand when the German tries to explain how difficult it will be for his country as the losers of the war.

Wynne-Candy is also a lonely person. He has one person whom he sees as his true friend, Theo Kretschmar-Schuldorff (the German at the dinner party, played beautifully and increasingly movingly by Anton Walbrook). They see each other just a handful of times. He falls in love with a woman who does not love him (a feisty Edwardian governess played by Deborah Kerr), and then pursues any woman who looks similar. He marries one of these women (also played by Deborah Kerr), and unexpectedly they are very happy.

An effective motif illustrating this loneliness is the increasing number of trophies on the wall from big game hunting. More appear regularly at each period of his life except during his marriage. But if big game hunting symbolises personal loneliness rather than the greatness, or for that matter the decadence, of the Empire, there are other ways in which the personal elements of this film have a wider political or national importance.

When Theo, by now an old man, leaves Nazi Germany he heads straight for Britain. He explains to the immigration officials that he cannot bear to stay and watch what the Nazis (who include his sons) are doing, and that he has come to Britain because he feels that this is now his home. He struggles to put into words why this is. Is it because his wife was British? Can it be his friendship with the foolish officer Wynne-Candy? Or his time spent in Prisoner of War camp, the only time he had been to Britain before, and during which he felt consistent bitterness towards Germany’s enemy? There is not really an explanation, but somehow he has carried with him an idea of home which he identifies with Britain.

When the General feels humiliated by the various events around him, he believes, after a lifetime spent trying to do the right thing, that he may as well give up. There are three people who spur him on. One is Theo, the second is his batman who has served him throughout his career, and the third is his driver Johnny, a very modern girl who smokes, wears lots of make up and speaks slang. She is again played by Deborah Kerr, who is convincing in each of her very different roles.

It is in part because of these three that the film is not a satire. Perhaps Wynne-Candy’s idealism is only of use in small doses, helping to give a moral sense and dignity so that a truly horrific system cannot take over. But it is not of great practical use in protecting a country. It is the people who live their everyday lives, getting on with their jobs, and trying to enjoy themselves without putting too much thought into their beliefs, but who are imbued with a basic decency, who are needed in far greater numbers than the Wynne-Candys. Finally the film suggests that the country needs the outsider who can perceive more about what that country should be and symbolises. It may not be true that this mixture always blends together to form a great country, but this film is a challenge to live up to that standard.
On 14th October there ended in Trafalgar Square an event that had been going on for three months and more: the sculptor Antony Gormley’s project ‘One & Other’ which was conceived to give a purpose to the famous fourth plinth by allowing random members of the public to occupy it for an hour each. The scheme followed several years of attempted ‘solutions’ to the problem of what to put there, when numerous artists of greater or lesser distinction offered their designs, usually left in place for a few months at a time.

It was a typical New Labour moment – or succession of moments: the much-trumpeted promotion of ‘the ordinary man’ (and of course woman) to a position of ‘eminence’ and quasi-distinction. Antony Gormley himself thought (according to the Evening Standard) that ‘it had been a very valuable experiment in the expansion of public space’ (whatever that means). He argued that the exercise ‘was asking who can be represented in art’. Unfortunately, it provided no clear answer to that question. A random succession of individuals, however worthy, ‘represented’ only by themselves performing on the whole banal actions, or using the opportunity to promote a favoured cause, is ‘art’ only under some liberal post-modern rubric. Some simply stood there with their clothes off, in compliment, perhaps, to the tradition of nude sculpture that goes back to pre-history and was perfected by the Greeks in the 5th century BC. ‘I don’t think you will be able to walk through the square without remembering these ordinary people now’, Gormley added. But the individuals who took part will be forgotten in proportion to the forgettability of their attainments, whether on the plinth or off it. The sole figure remembered will be Gormley himself, who dreamt up this ‘conceptual’ gimmick in the same spirit as other conceptual artists.

The most striking effect of ‘One & Other’ was to belittle the people who took part, emphasising only their minute unimportance in the heroic surroundings of the Square, dwarfed by a plinth designed to receive a considerably larger than life equestrian statue. Two relatively eminent people who were invited to take part, the directors of the National Portrait Gallery and the National Gallery, summed up the gamut of the public response. Sandy Nairne of the NPG gamely sat up there for his hour and made a drawing of the Square – a sensible use of such a vantage point but, ironically, not transforming himself into a work of art but assuming himself the role of artist. Nick Penny, of the National Gallery, said the whole idea smacked less of sculpture than of theatre (he is himself a distinguished historian of sculpture).

The simple truth is that none of these attempts to ‘use’ the plinth can be successful because they deliberately ignore the only purpose to which it can meaningfully be put, given its design and scale, to say nothing of its context with military heroes on the other plinths, and Nelson on his column above them all. It is of course unfashionable to think in terms of heroes, especially military heroes, though we are as much in need of them as ever. And the aesthetic correlative of the decline in society’s willingness to celebrate such people has been a decline in the technical capacity to produce appropriate monuments. One has only to glance at recent additions to the London streetscape to see this. Perhaps the best of a poor bunch is the statue of the Queen Mother, newly erected in the Mall. On 25 February 2009 the Daily Telegraph’s art critic Richard Dorment wrote in praise of it, calling it ‘a traditional monument in bronze, in the realist style’. He continued, ‘Thank the Lord no one at the Palace decided to go all trendy on us and commission a fountain or some sort of abstract sculpture’. He didn’t go on to discuss the problematic fourth plinth but his comments have a bearing on the whole question of what statues we want in public places.

How can ‘abstract sculpture’ embody ideas that express public sentiments? We may derive a rarefied aesthetic pleasure from, say, the Barbara Hepworth bronze blade, pierced by a perfectly circular hole, that stands by the lake in Battersea Park; but could that work ‘mean’ anything in Trafalgar Square? Sculpture parks are enjoying a vogue at the moment — Battersea Park was a pioneering one, dating from 1951, though long ago dismantled — and sculptures that are as often as not ‘abstract’ are enjoyed in landscape settings, a modern equivalent of the classic garden layout with fountains, statues and urns as eye-catchers. Can that enjoyment be translated into the urban context? How do works of modern sculpture relate to public spaces laden with historical associations, sometimes, like Trafalgar Square, already replete with imagery in the form of likenesses of distinguished people from the past?

There have been famous examples of abstract...
sculpture in public places in London: Hepworth’s magnificently convoluted Meridian in the courtyard of State House, Holborn (long ago, alas, sold to America); or Geoffrey Clarke’s large abstraction of 1958 high on the side of the Thorn (EMI) building in Upper St Martins’s Lane; but these were commissioned for particular buildings, as ornaments to the architecture, not as statements of public themes. Epstein’s 1952 sculpture of the Madonna and Child for the Convent of the Holy Child Jesus in Cavendish Square remains impressive, and until the convent closed was clearly related to the building it adorns both thematically and compositionally. It is certainly not abstract.

Nor is the statue of Field Marshal Smuts that Epstein designed for Parliament Square. When it was unveiled in 1956 it caused a rumpus, presumably on account of Epstein’s reputation as a modernist enfant terrible. It is in fact a work not only of great originality, with the figure leaning dramatically forward in an energetic, incipient stride, but also of supreme tact and decorum as a component of Parliament Square with its lines of worthies on plinths. Compare it with the statue of Lloyd George by Glynn Williams that has recently been erected on the next-door plinth. That provoked controversy when it was unveiled in October 2007, but the objections were entirely concerned with Lloyd George’s politics; no one seems to have pointed out that the statue is a truly atrocious piece of work.

With its glossy, reddish bronze, its ugly, incompetently managed drapery — the flying cloak is a textbook example of how not to do it — it’s a classic specimen of the vulgar pseudo-realism of much new sculpture in London. Williams is also responsible for the fanciful head of Henry Purcell, emerging out of a flourish of flowers (‘The Flowering of the English Baroque’) in Brewer’s Gardens, Victoria Street, which is quite simply dire. Beau Brummell, by Irena Sedlecka, in Jermyn Street, definitely tips over into the cheaply foxy-suave. I fear that Jermyn Street, definitely tips over into the cheaply foxy-suave. I fear that Jackson’s statue of the Queen Mother only just avoids falling into the same category.

Some of these sculptors are well qualified and apparently well trained academically; Williams is head of the sculpture school at the Royal College of Art. But such is the morass of bad discipline and historical ignorance that most students – and hence practising artists — have now stumbled into, even apparently good qualifications cannot guarantee fine work. For academic art involves more than just ‘traditional’ forms and methods of working. It entails learning, an understanding of the past as well as the present, a mental culture that can comprehend and express the many dimensions of a civilisation like ours. Public sculpture must relate, not just superficially, to the public ideas, the history and the national sentiment of a country.

An editorial in the Burlington Magazine for December 2007, lamenting the generally unsatisfactory state of public sculpture in London, pointed out that the only valid solution to the ‘fourth plinth’ question is to import a nineteenth-century equestrian bronze from somewhere else: Trafalgar Square is a cultural and aesthetic unity that cannot be ‘modernised’ by the introduction of work that is superficially ‘of our time’; any addition must be in keeping.

The editorial despairingly lists several of the sculptural horrors we have seen invading London streets in the last few years, notably the memorial to the Women of World War II in Whitehall, a second Cenotaph, with nothing of the refinement and restraint of Lutyns’s original. We might add the spherical monument at the bottom of Clive Steps, in Horse Guards Parade, commemorating the victims of the Bali bombing, which leaves one wondering how so many people could be adequately memorialised by something so uninteresting. There is an element, dare one say it, of the sentimental in this kind of response to a shocking world event.

It is characteristic of designers seeking to be ‘avant garde’ that they fail to catch the right mood. The despised ‘academic’ tradition could provide a more appropriate language for a public statement — if it could be achieved with real technical skill. And it can be done: look at the very able statue of John Wilkes in Fetter Lane by James Butler, R A. Why can we not get these things right?

Postscript:

In November, the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square was filled with a colossal statue of Sir Keith Park, a New Zealand airman who as head of Fighter Command led the resistance to the Luftwaffe over South-East England in the Battle of Britain. It is a towering portrait by the New Zealand sculptor Leslie Johnson, and of tolerable quality, though as a single figure it is not really appropriate to the plinth, which demands an equestrian work. It has been predictably attacked by an arts correspondent of the Guardian, who entirely misses the point of the site, as ‘overblown and militaristic’. It may indeed be too large for this position, it is in fact the fibreglass prototype of a smaller bronze that will be erected in Waterloo Place. Meanwhile, next spring a new succession of ‘avant garde’ artists will be given space to be irrelevant and pointless on the plinth. No lessons, it seems, have been learned.

Andrew Wilton was the first Curator of the Clore Gallery for the Turner Collection at Tate Britain.
Britten’s operatic achievements have blinded us to the long struggle within English music that preceded the first performance of Peter Grimes. Purcell is granted pioneer status, and individual works by Vaughan Williams, Holst or Delius are remembered — even occasionally performed — but the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are widely regarded as an operatic blank, dominated by Italian and Germanic imports. To the extent that it ever existed the native school of opera is regarded as having sunk without trace.

Many theories have been put forward to explain this situation. The determinedly foreign tastes of the only people who could afford opera must have played a major part, as must the equally determined resistance of popular audiences to those tastes. Nevertheless the Victorian musical press is full of speculation and advice as to how a native school of opera might be established. Should it be continental opera composed by Englishmen? Or was a properly native school possible?

Irish-born Michael Balfe (1809-1870) achieved international success with Italian operas composed to an English text. We remember The Bohemian Girl (1843) as a poor thing — contemporaries thought differently. Together with the other composers of the so-called English Ring, Benedict and Wallace, Balfe created a foundation on which it should have been possible to build. In 1857 the soprano Louisa Pyne and her husband William Harrison established the Pyne-Harrison Opera Company to produce English opera. Success with Balfe’s Rose of Castile led to the presentation of a series of native works, and to the nearest thing so far seen in England to the establishment of a national opera.

Exhausted by their efforts, Pyne and Harrison gave up management with a final performance of The Beggars’ Opera in March 1864, thereby extinguishing the hopes of the young Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900). Sullivan is best known for his collaboration with Gilbert but in his own right he was a tireless worker for English music, ensuring that the orchestras he conducted should consist only of English players, and publicly resisting the appointment of outsiders like Richter to English musical posts. He also studied English musical style, writing a number of works which were intended to foster a ‘national’ sense long before Elgar and Vaughan Williams took up the same burden.

Sullivan began working on his first opera, The Sapphire Necklace, in August 1862, but in the absence of Pyne and Harrison it failed to see production. Most of the music is lost, and it tends to be disregarded as a factor in the composer’s development. However the problems of finding an outlet seem to have driven him to undertake less ambitious works which could find both a theatre and an audience. The result was the long series of comic operas with which everybody is familiar. For Sullivan these operas were never anything other than the preliminary means to a greater end: the establishment of a national school of operatic writing. A start was made with The Sorcerer in 1877. A published manifesto by Richard D’Oyly Carte made the wider purpose of the production apparent: ‘Author, composer, singers and actors are all English. I appeal to the public to come forward and support the undertaking.’

Sullivan could not have anticipated the success which came to him over the next decade, but it is clear that both he and D’Oyly Carte became increasingly frustrated by the limited nature of the comic opera formula which they had unwittingly fostered. D’Oyly Carte, with Sullivan’s approval, bought a building plot in Shaftesbury Avenue, and on 15 December 1888 his wife laid the foundation stone of an opera house which was to mark a new beginning for English opera. This building, the Royal English Opera, still stands as the Palace Theatre.

Sullivan was now forced to confront his own position. What sort of opera should he write for the new house, and what was its musical style to be? The answer had been given in 1885 during the course of an interview with the San Francisco Chronicle:

The opera of the future is a compromise. I have thought and worked and toiled and dreamt of it. Not

Ivanhoe has a strong claim to be considered the first emotionally adult opera in English. Supported by masterful orchestral writing and superb handling of the language, the characters live and breathe like those of Britten.

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the French school, with its gaudy and tinsel tunes, its lambent lights and shades, its theatrical effects and clap-trap; not the Wagnerian school with its mysticism and unreal sentiment; not the Italian school with its fantastic airs and fioriture and far-fetched effects. It is a compromise between these three — a sort of eclectic school, a selection of the merits of each one. I myself will attempt to produce a grand opera of this new school... it is the dream of my life. I do not believe in operas based on gods and myths. That is the fault of the German school. What we want are plots that give rise to human emotions and human passions. Opera should speak to the heart, and not to the head.

Sullivan’s objections to the nature of continental opera could only have come from England. They amount to a conscious affirmation of the national tradition of humanity and natural realism which begins with Chaucer and runs through Shakespeare to the novelists. Operatically it led him to Ivanhoe as the subject for his new work. Thanks to Scott’s antiquarian knowledge the novel presents a credible picture of its chosen period (c 1194). Its protagonists are not the insubstantial entities of legend, but flesh-and-blood figures who, with a little imaginative allowance, might really have existed at the time. In keeping with Sullivan’s wish to write the foundation work of a new national school Ivanhoe deals with one of the great narratives of English history — the struggle between Saxons and Normans. It also celebrates the chivalric ideal which was an integral part of Victorian culture.

Ivanhoe was produced at D’Oyly-Carte’s new opera house on 31 January 1891. Almost everything one reads about the opera is either misinformed or tendentious, or both. The facetious review by Bernard Shaw, which remains in print, gives an entirely false impression of the real achievement of the music. The myth of failure has become so entrenched that one is almost afraid to point out that the opera house project came to an end because the public did not want Messager’s La Basoche.

Ivanhoe has a strong claim to be considered the first emotionally adult opera in English. Supported by masterful orchestral writing and superb handling of the language, the characters live and breathe like those of Britten. They are, in Sullivan’s favoured term, human, and quite unlike the insubstantial heroes and heroines of the English Ring. Allowing for the presence of a few American singers, all the personnel of the project were English. In our willingness to embrace the pastoral nationalism of Vaughan Williams and the visionary imperialism of Elgar we tend to ignore the earlier, historical school in which Sullivan and others laboured. We think of it as passé and inartistic even though our own popular culture is saturated with historical romance from Wolf Hall to The Tudors. As mass immigration and the dystopian effects of multiculturalism take their ever-deadlier toll we shall, sooner or later, be forced to assert ourselves — to take a stand and say who we are. Beginning as it does with the words ‘Each day this realm of England faints and fails,’ and ending with a celebration of ‘the banner of England’, Ivanhoe would make a valuable rallying point for any attempt to define and defend the national identity. Both by its intrinsic quality and through the exigence of the times, Ivanhoe claims a central place in our operatic tradition.

A complete recording of Ivanhoe conducted by David Lloyd-Jones was issued by Chandos in February 2010.

D J Eden is joint editor of The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan.
IN SHORT


Frank Johnson was a sort of conservative but most certainly not a Conservative with a capital C, being, as a journalist, of a somewhat anarchic nature. From an East End working class family (his father had been a baker), he had a natural affinity with many of the ideas of the Institute of Economic Affairs. But Frank would not have been Frank if that had interfered with his ability to see the funny side of everything, like Margaret Thatcher’s 1979 campaign in the Cadbury’s chocolate factory.

The Times obituary said that he excelled in ‘a very English art form’, which would have pleased him as he was, despite his travels to European cities and capitals, a very English person: ‘A good parliamentary sketch can be high art, but art with a hard-nosed purpose. Sketch writers know they are an important arm of the democratic process. Unless we can laugh at our politicians we can never keep them in order.’

The Telegraph obituary quoted a number of his witticisms about politicians of every hue and stripe. Though I followed his career with interest and read him whenever I could while he peregrinated through the right-wing press, I had not realized that he invented the term ‘chattering classes’. That alone will keep his name alive.

The Telegraph obituary quoted a number of his witticisms about politicians of every hue and stripe. Though I followed his career with interest and read him whenever I could while he peregrinated through the right-wing press, I had not realized that he invented the term ‘chattering classes’. That alone will keep his name alive. The Telegraph also gave the story of his last few days, which I read at the time and found funny, moving and absolutely typical all at once.

‘Johnson endured cancer with exemplary courage for seven years’. He would say of his illness that he bore it ‘with the stoicism of the London working class from whence I came’.

The Sunday before he went into hospital for the final time, he attended the performance of Aida at La Scala in which the tenor Roberto Alagna (as Radames) walked off the stage in a fit of pique after being booed; Johnson immediately filed the story to The Daily Telegraph.

He was a journalist to the marrow of his bones and all attempts to be anything else, even editor, failed. But who cares when we have those wonderful sketches, many of which were collected by his widow, Virginia Fraser, in this recently published volume. This book will make a wonderful present, though the potential giver ought to be warned that there is a strong chance that he will want to keep it for himself.

Helen Szamuely

History Lesson: A Race Odyssey, Mary Lefkowitz, Yale University Press, 2008.

Lefkowitz tells here of the intellectual corruption and absurdities black slavery has bequeathed us. Her scholarship has been traduced by black colleagues and betrayed by cowardly white ones. She describes graphically how at her (private) college, Wellesley, black professors work in cliques, intimidating students and other staff. They proclaim that civilisation began in Africa and that the Jews financed the slave trade.

Lefkowitz takes it as read that Black intellectuals understand the ‘slave trade’ to mean the relatively short time in early modernity when the West returned to slave-owning. Black intellectuals often see it as the definitive version of this hideous practice. Slavery, however, is immemorial and remains endemic in Africa. Communism and Nazism were far worse versions than American plantation-slavery. So were all pre-modern slave systems. All this Lefkowitz knows perfectly well. As to the genesis of civilisation, the true claimants are Mesopotamia, technically, Greece intellectually and Israel and Rome, theologically, as Lefkowitz again surely knows better than most.

She does not, however, explain the profound academic disorder she describes which comes mostly from public finance, which in free societies eludes intellectual discipline rather easily. In the 1960s American and British education alike began to diverge from mainstream opinion, following the earlier French example. Private American schools now endure, by osmosis, the same ideological travails. The results include the frequent collapse of learning and manifest errors persisting for decades.

Similar madness afflicts British universities, where a reborn anti-Semitism hides behind hostility to Israel. British socialists often share, moreover, the unspoken, repulsive American ‘liberal’ view of blacks as soulless incompetents or trouble-makers, needing propitiation. American ‘liberals’ and British socialists, aware today that general socialism is ruinous, wage phoney war against capitalism, securing for themselves a socialist base, to milk the market, while imprisoning their welfare clientele in bad schooling and fiscal servitude.

American intellectual life remains internationally pre-eminent, but public finance has partly socialised education, facilitating a subversive ideology, spawning falsehoods. ‘Liberalism’ is a socialist agenda, which
has destroyed many black families, something
neither Civil War nor Thirties Depression managed,
and also vastly enlarged an overall dependent class,
systematically encouraged to mistake its own interests.
The liberals want the black welfariat in particular not
to grasp that most black Americans have joined the
affluent majority and that American blacks are the
world’s richest black population.

Lefkowitz is an eminent scholar, but those of her
persuasion are partly to blame. She speaks indignantly,
of being ‘accused’ of conservatism. Does agreeing with
the Aristotle, Shakespeare, Burke ascendancy, deserve
**accusations**? Blanket dismissal of conservatism is
the profoundest folly. Neither piety nor wit nor wilful
error can change history’s realities and the assertion
of historic realities is conservatism’s first clause. If all
conservative thinking is expunged from academia, all
that is left is bigotry. In Burke’s words, ‘Slavery is a
weed that grows in every soil’.

**Dennis O’Keeffe**

**Gambling Man — Charles II and the Restoration,**
Jenny Uglow, Faber & Faber, 2009, £25.

What have the following in common, Elizabeth
Gaskell, Thomas Bewick and King Charles II? Answer
— all three have been the subjects of biographies by
Jenny Uglow. What can she mean, we wonder, by
deserting the ultra-respectable purlieu of the priestly
parlour and a wood-engraver’s atelier for the almost
orgiastic Restoration court: how could she, who
admires Cranford’s creator, turn unblinking eyes
on a man who, to this day, borrows a name from a
contemporary racing stud, Old Rowley?

A more important question of course is, does her
gamble come off? This is an absolutely delightful book,
leaving the reader feeling sympathetic admiration for
its hero, and dazzled, enchanted even, by his times
and his milieu.

This is not a full biography, focussing as it does
on the first ten years only of a twenty-five year reign
(1660-1685), but it glances back to the birth and
forward to the death of its subject. The full story is
there, wonderfully well told and illustrated, for it was
an age rich indeed in its iconography and witness: we
‘see’ it through the eyes of Van Dyck, Lely and Samuel
Cooper, ‘hear’ it in voices as diverse as those of Pepys
and Milton.

It is facile no doubt, naïve even, to see parallels
between then and now, let alone to sketch out lessons
from the past; today’s statesmen are surely wise
to ignore history, else how could our soldiers find
themselves once again in Afghanistan? But this
‘common reader’ could not avoid being struck, for
instance, by the similarity between pre-restoration
and pre-election England, the hated standing army
maintained at ruinous expense, armed then with the
pike, now with the ballpoint pen. Do we not need
another ‘restoration’?

**David Edelsten.**
BIG Brother Watch fights injustice and campaigns to protect our civil liberties and personal freedoms.

WE look for the sly, slow seizure of control by the state — of power, of information and of our lives.

WE advocate the return of our liberties and freedoms and look to ordinary people to join our cause.

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