

# Labour & Trade Union Review

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## Labour is in a Coma while the NHS is under threat.

Not long after the death of Stalin, the Soviet Union and other eastern European countries adopted a 'market socialist' approach to their economies and public services. Resources were allocated according to a price mechanism and there was a range of buyers and sellers for goods and services. The thinking appeared to be that the state is an inefficient allocator of resources and that individuals working within the system would act in their own interests rather than in the interests of their employer and would thus need to be disciplined by the market.

What was a coherent system of resource allocation was disrupted by the establishment of this *faux* market. It was all downhill after that.

With the decline of socialism after 1979 and especially after the defeat of the miner's strike, a variant of market socialism emerged in the UK. Usually described as 'quasi-markets', the policy adopted involved allocating state resources by a system of buying and selling with information for market choice provided by government bureaucracies and quangos. Notably, both Health and Education went down this route.

It is worth noting that until 1984 administration costs in the NHS amounted to around 5% of budget. 1989 saw the full-blooded introduction of a quasi-market into the health service. GPs became budget holders, commissioning services from hospitals and they were entitled to retain surpluses at the end of the financial year. GPs were slowly being turned from public servants into businessmen, although the persistence of a public service ethic was to keep them high in public esteem for some time afterwards.

In 2000 another upheaval occurred. Labour under Blair had

no problem with the idea of running public services in a quasi market and was sold on the idea, peddled by think tanks such as Demos, that the public had become consumers of the services provided by the state. They wanted choices of hospitals, doctors, and schools not an 'iron rice bowl' of guaranteed but uniform provision. There was no evidence for this proposition, but why allow evidence to spoil an appealing ideology?

The 2000 legislative changes resulted in widespread upheaval as the formation, dissolution and rearrangement of the structure and responsibilities of NHS authorities and trusts went ahead. Private as well as public providers now had a role in the system. Administrative costs headed up beyond 15% of the health service budget. So much for the concern over 'inefficiency' in public services and the domination of the NHS by 'faceless bureaucrats'. These are the inevitable accompaniments of the quasi-marketisation of public services.

Having attacked and undermined the public service ethos of the health service, Labour has been in a poor position to oppose Andrew Lansley's very radical proposals for putting the bulk of the NHS budget in the hands of GPs as the main commissioning agents of health services, with a wide remit of choice for the purchase of those services. The structures inherited from Labour, particularly the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) will be abolished and, in an act of 'creative destruction', new institutions and practices will arise according to the demand generated by GPs. A further consequence of this change is that GPs will be able to commission services from commercial organisations which, if they feel that they have been treated unfairly in market terms, will be able to sue the NHS.

The way is thus open to the dismantling of the primary care structures of the NHS, staffed by people with a public service ethos and their replacement with businesses mainly concerned with making a profit out of health care. Instead of a quasi-market, we will have a private health service funded by the state. It would be a relatively short step from here to gradually introducing charges and private insurance into the system, thus com-

pleting the dismantling of the NHS. The Tories are technically correct to say that their current proposals were included in their manifesto (p.45). But they were not trumpeted as the radical break-up of the system that they actually are, no doubt because the Tories knew that the public would not wear it and for this reason they claimed that they would not attempt a 'top-down' reform.

The fact that they are couched in the quasi-market rhetoric beloved of New Labour probably meant that they went unnoticed by Labour politicians, except insofar as they looked pretty much like what New Labour had been doing anyway to promote consumerism and undermine the public service ethic within the public services. Perhaps Labour politicians were too lazy to read the Tories' manifesto properly.

It is not surprising that the Labour response to these proposals has been so abysmal: they have been complicit in bringing us to this place. Cameron has been very cunning in employing a rhetoric of support for public services and public spiritedness while actually dismantling public services. In essentials this is the policy adopted by the Blair governments and never repudiated by Gordon Brown.

This is very disabling for a Labour party which continues to fail to distance itself from the neoliberal consensus that dominated the Blair-Brown years. The invisibility of the shadow health secretary, John Healey, is ample testimony to this. If Healey is actually in sympathy with the Government's policies, as seems to be the case, Miliband needs to get rid of him immediately and replace him with someone committed to an NHS with a public service ethos.

So will the Tories get a free run at fulfilling a long held Thatcherite dream – the destruction of the NHS? One has to say, at the time of writing, that the prospects of them doing this actually look quite good. Labour is disabled, the Liberals are providing cover for the Conservatives and the only coherent opposition to the proposals seems to be coming from well-informed Tory MPs like Sarah Wollaston, an ex-GP herself. One can only hope that the easy period of the Con-Dem government is now coming to an end as

the squeeze on the economy really begins to take effect and people feel the dismantling of the welfare state personally, in their pockets and in the P45s in their letterboxes. Furthermore, Question Time on TV seemed to indicate that awareness that GPs have been transformed from public servants to business people has been finally getting through. The 'soft soap' element in the Government proposals, that the patient is safe in the hands of a kindly and disinterested GP will not be nearly so convincing.

The public needs a much stronger sign from Labour that it has made a break with the past. Labour will be disabled as an effective opposition to the Coalition if it does not make this break. It needs to repudiate the quasi-market reforms of the past, or at least draw a line under them for the time being. It then needs to think seriously about how to reintroduce public service into the GP service. This is a meaty task which requires a new shadow health secretary. Time is running out.

## The Firewood Of Hell

Someone shouts:

'You're all going to die!  
I make you into the firewood of hell.  
your tsars seized the Caucasus, infidel.'  
It's lights out, death sang its lullaby.  
Once more the colour is red  
in a post-Soviet airport.  
You kill, we follow.  
A former Red Army in blood wallows.  
The long dead of Chechnya  
sends in the ghosts.  
No defence against those already dead.  
You tortured and killed  
but their souls still burn  
in the bodies of loved ones,  
revenge led.  
Leningrad, Stalingrad,  
did you not learn,  
through famine, without hope,  
when life seemed shed,  
for their faith, their beliefs,  
humans still yearn.

Wilson John Haire.

# The Labour & Trade Union Review

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# Why Obama Can't

A review of Barack Obama's *The Audacity of Hope*.

The authors of the US Constitution never intended that the President should be directly elected by ordinary citizens. They also left it uncertain as to whether all citizens should have a vote at all; practice varied in the various states that came together as the USA. But the intention was that experienced politicians should decide which one of them should have the top job.

The authors of the US Constitution were also over-concerned about influence and connection, and tried to avoid it, very unsuccessfully. They made it a rule that members of Congress could not serve in the President's Cabinet. And rather than having Congress elect the President, they decided on a separate Electoral College that the voters would choose just for that purpose. That left the door open for candidates to the Electoral College to be pledged for a specific candidate, so it effectively became a popular vote. Of course it is also based on states, so that a candidate who gets a majority of the votes can still lose. Bush Junior benefited from this in 2000, but then so did Lincoln in 1860, getting elected with just 40% of the popular vote, winning most of the North and nothing in the South.

The USA has functioned as a highly open society, but that does not always mean a good society. Indeed emptiness and mistrust are features of the modern USA, lots of people have noted that. But very few dare say that the system has not worked as intended and needs a drastic overhaul. Maybe they don't even dare think it. A few generations back there were major politicians who'd argue for something more like a parliamentary system, with government and legislature more or less the same. President Woodrow Wilson was one of

Gwydion M. Williams

them. But the USA has grown stronger in its sense of distinctiveness as it has absorbed huge numbers of people from all over the world and processed them to be Standard Individualists on the US model. The same thing applies in sport: the USA used to be a strong cricketing nation but the game has been wholly pushed out by baseball. They also remain a weak soccer nation, preferring their own version of football.

Getting elected to office requires catering to the prejudices of a free-floating electorate. Obama says in his book about his program of local meetings, meeting the electorate, "most of them were too busy with work or their kids to pay much attention to politics, and they spoke instead of what they saw before them". [A]

Like Bill Clinton, Obama was good at making an impression at such meetings. Unlike Clinton, he hadn't actually run anything. Clinton had a total of 12 years as Governor of Arkansas, being once defeated and then re-elected four times. Of course Arkansas has less than three million inhabitants, but it was a good background. Clinton made some bad choices, notably support for the harassment of Iraq and Yugoslavia, but they were at least his choices. Obama may have won with the slogan 'Yes We Can', but it was never specified what this meant. In office, he gives the impression of never having been in control, in spite of bringing in Hillary Clinton as his Secretary of State.

There is also a lack of vision. Obama does note the inherent weakness of the Republican position:

"If the Democrats have had trouble winning, it appears that the Republicans – having won elections on the basis of pledges that often defy reality (tax cuts without service cuts, privatisation of Social Security with no change in benefits, war without sacrifice) – cannot govern." [B]

But that's really a criticism of the electorate, who demand such pledges and have now gone further with the rise of the 'Tea Party' on the right of Republicanism. Obama does also say "most people who serve in Washington have been trained either as lawyers or as political operatives – professions that tend to place a premium on winning arguments rather than solving problems." [C] But that's exactly his own history.

Obama complains about the arguments of the Republican Right, "according to these activists, liberal judges had placed themselves above the law, basing their opinions not on the Constitution but on their own whims and desired results, finding rights to abortion or sodomy that did not exist in the text..." [D] The trouble is, such complaints are a fair comment. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, no such rights were ever contemplated and would have been decisively rejected at the time, if the issue had ever been raised. The original Constitution also protected slavery, denied political rights to women and did not guarantee even one-man-one-vote for whites: all of these things had to be fought for in popular politics rather than being awarded by the courts. In Western Europe, the rules were changed by normal politics and are generally accepted. In the USA it was done by shysterism and there is some justification for popular resentment.

Obama does also note how US politics works – you can get nowhere without money, and most of that comes from the rich. "Absent great personal wealth, there is basically one way of raising the kind of money involved in a U.S. Senate race. You have to ask rich people for it." [E] "But I worry that there was also another change at work. Increasingly, I found myself spending time with people of means – law firm partners and investment bankers, hedge fund managers and venture capitalists. As a rule, they were smart, interesting people, knowledgeable about public policy, liberal in their politics, expecting nothing more than a

hearing of their opinions in exchange for their checks. But they reflected, almost uniformly, the perspective of their class: the top 1 percent or so of the income scale that can afford to write a \$2000 check to a political candidate. They believed in the free market and an educational meritocracy.... They had no patience with protectionism, found unions troublesome, and were not particularly sympathetic to those whose lives were upended by the movements of global capital.” [F]

Obama and most other politicians need to gather support from such people, so it's not surprising that government policies have favoured them and that they have got the bulk of the new wealth created since the 1980s. The older system of 'machine politics' at least ensured that ordinary people were looked after. Fighting as individuals, ordinary people lose out to those few who can write cheques for \$2000 and never really miss the money. The USA also has no limits on campaign spending, so while money doesn't always win an election, lack of money almost always loses.

The other big problem is that the people Obama mentioned are mostly wealth-acquirers rather than wealth-creators. Complex financial games have become the core. Manufacturing is getting downgraded and US skilled jobs are being lost. This is no problem to the 'Overclass' that Obama mentions, they are doing fine out of an imbalanced US economy and the rise of East Asia. In the broader sweep of history, they are also sawing the same branch that they're sitting on. But there are always enough tame intellectuals to reassure them all is well.

Obama notes that the USA is getting increasingly dependent on imported brains for hard technical knowledge, as distinct from wheeler-dealer skills in fancy financial markets. At the heart of the US software industry, "at least half of the group looked Asian; a large percentage of the whites had East European names. As far as I could tell, not one was black or Latino..."

"Google needed to stay competitive, which meant hiring the top graduates of the top maths, engineering, and computer science programs in the country... You could count on two hands, Dave told me, the number of black and Latino kids in those programs.

"In fact, according to Dave, just finding American-born engineers, whatever

their race, was getting harder – which was why every company in Silicon Valley had come to rely heavily on foreign students.” [G]

Obama makes it clear that some people are doing very nicely out the pattern that Reagan launched in the 1980s. Commenting of Bush Junior's tax cuts, which ate up the surplus Clinton had created, he noted:

"The bulk of the debt is a direct result of the President's tax cuts, 47.4 percent of which went to the top 5% of the income bracket, 36.7 percent of which went to the top 1 percent, and 15% of which went to the top one-tenth of 1 percent, typically people making \$1.6 million a year.” [H] He then quotes the super-rich Warren Buffett saying "If there's class warfare going on in America, then my class is winning... Though I've never used tax shelters or had a tax planner, after including the payroll taxes we each pay, I'll pay a lower effective tax rate this year than my receptionist. In fact, I'm pretty sure I pay a lower rate than the average American. And if the President [Bush Junior] has his way, I'll be paying even less."

"Before I left, I asked Buffett how many of his fellow billionaires shared his views. He laughed.

"I'll tell you, not very many' he said. 'They have this idea that it's 'their money' and they deserve to keep every penny of it. What they don't factor in is all the public investment that lets us live the way we do. Take me as an example. I happen to have a talent for allocating capital. But my ability to use that talent is completely dependent on the society I was born into.” [J]

"The rich in America have little to complain about. Between 1971 and 2001, while the median wage and salary income of the average worker showed literally no gain, the income of the top hundredth of a percent went up almost 500 percent.” [K]

A little of this got through in 2008. But by 2010, the ordinary voters were hysterical about state power and 'creeping socialism'. Middle America elected politicians who look after Rich America and ignore Middle America's decline. Obama had to keep the tax cuts for the rich, in order to get a viable budget from a Republican-run House of Representatives.

Europe has outgrown hard-line re-

ligion. The USA has failed to do this. 1960s liberalism promised a lot, but discredited itself with a senseless war in Vietnam, which it then lost. Obama is part of the process, having fallen back from mother's freethinking. The revived religion is a source of comfort in a world emptied of meaning by commerce, but at least in its US version it also makes the disease worse. A lot of the popular Protestant congregations depend on contributions from their members, and so are wide open to manipulation by the rich. Whereas Christians in Britain are more on the left, in the USA they are much more likely to vote for right-wing parties committed to empty commercial values. Right-wing Christians are noisy about some aspects of the tradition and evasive or silent on others. One little right-wing group has become notorious for going round to funerals blaming homosexuality for the USA's ills. No one seems to think to blame usury, theft, covetousness or false witness, nor even adultery, even though such things are much more forcefully condemned in the Old Testament.

The USA as a whole should be considered ex-Christian. The faith disintegrated but social habits persist. William Jennings Bryan was probably the last major Christian in US politics. Mostly remembered for his foolish line as a last-ditch defender of biblical literalism against Darwinism, he also showed a concern for peace and social justice. He was Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of State, and resigned when Wilson took the USA into World War One, overturning long-standing traditions. Before that, he had been three times Democratic candidate for the Presidency, and the USA three times rejected him.

Obama got elected by being vague and not seriously displeasing the rich. His weak Presidency has been the predictable outcome of his starting-point.

#### References

[A] Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope*. Cannongate 2007, page 7.

[B] *Ibid.*, page 23.

[C] *Ibid.*, page 48

[D] *Ibid.*, page 79

[E] *Ibid.*, page 110.

[F] *Ibid.*, page 113-2

[G] *Ibid.*, page 141-2

[H] *Ibid.*, page 188

[J] *Ibid.*, page 189-91

[K] *Ibid.*, page 192

# Froggy

## News From Across The Channel

### French Railways humiliated

France Inter radio reported on 25 January 2011 that Guillaume Pepy, the head of French Railways (SNCF), would on that day make a speech expressing his deep sorrow and regret about the role of the SNCF in the deportation of 75 000 Jews during the Occupation. He made his speech in the disused station of Bobigny, where convoys left from between 1942 and 1944. A commemorative monument will be built there. Pepy stated that trains were requisitioned at the time by the Nazis, but that nevertheless, “memory” was now part of the identity of SNCF and he would make the public apology.

Pepy first made that speech in California in 2010; it was a condition, in fact a state law, imposed by Schwarzenegger’s state government as part of France’s bid to build a high speed railway line. (Schwarzenegger eventually cancelled that law.)

The last word on that little news item was given to Gilbert Garrel, head of the main railways trade union (CGT-Chemins) who pointed out that the “memory” was selective: Pepy had had only a few words in his Californian speech concerning Resistance in the SNCF. Clearly the selectiveness is politically motivated, and a reflection of the balance of power; it would be difficult to imagine the US being made to apologize for the genocide of the Indian indigenous population before they were allowed to export their goods to a particular country.

### Stephane Hessel

In this context, the importance of Stephane Hessel’s book stands out. This former decorated Resistant and diplomat has been much in the news internationally recently, for the publica-

tion of a small book entitled “*Indignez-vous*” (“Cry out!” or “Be outraged”), addressed primarily to young people; it has sold nearly a million copies since October 2010. Hessel’s reasons for personal outrage include the growing gap between the very rich and the very poor, France’s treatment of its illegal immigrants, the need to re-establish a free press, the need to protect the environment, the plight of Palestinians and the importance of protecting the French welfare system. He calls for peaceful and non-violent insurrection. The book is a response to the present economic crisis and cuts in benefits and public services; it also serves, although it does not say so, to fight attempts to humiliate the French for their war time record. It reminds us of the standards of welfare established after World War 2 by the 15 March 1944 Programme of the National Council of the Resistance. These standards are being eroded today, when the wealth of the nation is so much greater. This 1944 Programme has been accepted almost universally since its inception: it is, or was until recently, the consensus. The President of the Republic Nicolas Sarkozy invoked it in his big speech to the Assembled Parliament in Versailles at the beginning of his reign.

Stephane Hessel is not associated with any political party. There does not seem to be a possibility at the moment of a connection between the message of his book and any political action.

On the liberal right his message has been dismissed as old fashioned and irrelevant in today’s world. But since it is difficult to reject it totally, a journalist in *Le Monde* has developed a new line of argument.

The economics correspondent of *Le Monde* complained that the book *Indignez-vous* does not once mention China and

does not rejoice about the rising standard of living in China, India and Brazil which is due to globalisation. That argument was not put forward in the past when wage struggles were taking place: workers were not told that they could not aspire to high wages when the rest of the world was starving. Why now? Is the West giving up its privileged position in the world? No. This is a way of displacing the argument and an attempt to deflect the frustration of people who see their standard of living eroded. It is true that all in the West have a comparatively high standard of living, but, within a privileged society, the less powerful are seeing their standard of living diminished, while the elite becomes better off. It is the uneven distribution of the cutbacks, and the liberal economy in general that rankle and which Stephane Hessel is right to denounce.

### BDS: Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions.

Stephane Hessel says in his book:

“Today, my main indignation concerns Palestine, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank of Jordan. This conflict is outrageous. It is absolutely essential to read the report by Richard Goldstone, of September 2009, on Gaza, in which this South African, Jewish judge, who claims even to be a Zionist, accuses the Israeli army of having committed “acts comparable to war crimes and perhaps, in certain circumstances, crimes against humanity” during its “Operation Cast Lead,” which lasted three weeks.

“I went back to Gaza in 2009 myself, when I was able to enter with my wife thanks to our diplomatic passports, to study first-hand what this report said. People who accompanied us were not authorized to enter the Gaza Strip. There

and in the West Bank of Jordan. We also visited the Palestinian refugee camps set up from 1948 by the United Nations agency UNRWA, where more than three million Palestinians expelled off their lands by Israel wait even yet for a more and more problematical return.”

Hessel however thinks the Palestinians should not use violence, even though, from his experience in the Resistance, that is, a group which used terrorist methods, he understands them doing so. He says:

“I think, naturally, that terrorism is unacceptable; but it is necessary to acknowledge (from experience in France) that when people are occupied by forces immensely superior to their own, popular reaction cannot be altogether bloodless.”

Should we conclude that violence was also not the way, in occupied France, of reacting to the situation? Hessel does not say.

A movement for the boycott of Israel exists in France. As part of that movement’s activities, Stephane Hessel was invited along with a number of well-

known personalities to address a conference at the Ecole Normale Superieure on 12 January this year. The Ecole Normale Superieure (ENS) is a very prestigious Higher Education institution (alumni are Simone Weil, Jean-Paul Sartre etc and Stephane Hessel himself). The conference was to discuss the boycott of Israel. Under the avowed pressure of CRIF (the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions) the director of ENS cancelled the event. At a meeting organised a few days later to protest at this act of censorship, and at which Hessel was present, an Israeli student at ENS suggested that CRIF should be renamed and the initials stand for “Coalition of Representatives of Israel in France”. This was reported in *l’Humanité*.

### Mortgages for low income people!

Meanwhile France follows America to create a property bubble.

Publicity campaign heard on *France Inter* radio: (background noises of a revolution) “Everyone a home owner! Be an owner occupier, the State will support you! “

The State will support you by giving you an interest free loan to buy a house or flat, new or old, as long as your income is below a certain ceiling.

The State will lend you even more if you buy a property in a certified “sensitive urban zone” (this is the official term), that is, an area where lots of people on low incomes live, many of them immigrants. Does this remind you of anything?

Under the scheme the State will give you a no-interest loan; but first you have to borrow the money to buy the property. The State loan is only a top up. So the scheme helps banks make money: in order to qualify for this interest-free loan, you must first take a loan from the bank and other financial institutions, since the 0% loan cannot equal more than 50% of the money you have borrowed from other sources.

The French are well known for following Anglo-Saxon fashions several years late, but considering the term “le sub-prime” has entered the French language, you might have thought they would have given that particular fashion a miss.

## A Spectre Haunting Straw?

The following letter appeared (Sat.-Sun. 15-16 Jan. 2011) in the Morning Star (the mainstream CPB (Communist Party) daily) headed RACISM. The title put, by MS sub-editors on the letter, was; Straw’s got it wrong on British child sex rings.

“This week, after the sentencing of Mohammed Liaqat and Abid Sadique for involvement in a child sex ring, former Home Secretary Jack Straw opined that “there is a specific problem which involves Pakistani heritage men ... who target vulnerable young white girls.”

“Really? In the latest manifestation of equally chilling perversions, also this week, white British IT consultant Colin Blanchard and four women were also indicted for what prosecutors described as “one of the most sickening paedophile rings this country has seen.”

“Sadly this country has seen many, largely involving white Anglo-Saxon

### S McGouran

males. Mr. Straw has seemingly not seen fit to comment on them.

“The fact that his brother William was found guilty of indecent assault on a 16-year-old surely has nothing to do with his selective perception? Stones and glass houses come to mind.

“FELICITY ARBUTHNOT  
“London E9”

Straw’s weasel words “Pakistani heritage men...” really should come back to haunt him. When his brother was sentenced nobody made similar noises about “Lithuanian heritage” (meaning ‘Jewish’ — as surely as “Pakistani heritage” is code for ‘Muslim’) men being particularly prone to this sort of crime.

Ms. Arbuthnot, a free-lance journalist, and MS may be condemned for publishing this information. But by anybody’s standards it is fair comment.

Straw like too many other New Labour MPs is trying to make political capital out of anti-Muslim feeling. (Even the Tory grandee Baroness Warsi felt bound to say that being anti-Muslim is now respectable. She mentioned the ‘dinner party test’. She was spun against a matter of hours before her speech (reported Wed., 19.01.11). On Tuesday, The Independent claimed she was not a competent Chair of the Conservative Party. A young white male was appointed her deputy.

Whether the coalition parties’ repudiate Islamophobia (or dump members who talk out of turn) remains to be seen. The media are determined not to be deprived of an ‘out-group’ to blame (for nearly everything). Cameron feels beholden to the media, particularly Rupert Murdoch’s newspapers. He is as obsessive about Murdoch as his predecessor Blair. Baroness Warsi, and others may walk the plank.

# The Tudors: a Mangled Fairy-Story

The Tudor dynasty in England only lasted three generations, but left England changed utterly. They passed on a complex legacy to the Stuart dynasty, which itself failed after four generations as monarchs of England and Scotland. Six generations of the unimpressive Hanoverian dynasty then kept the country stable through its dramatic transformation into an industrial society.[E]

If there was a destiny that shaped Great Britain's rise, then it wasn't a destiny that cared anything for Christianity in either its Protestant or Roman Catholic versions. Nor for the happiness of individual monarchs, most of whom had tough and disappointing lives. But the continuing uncertainty over royal power meant that monarchs needed Parliament and it remained significant. Similar institutions in other parts of Europe tended to lose importance, be forgotten or be suppressed. In the long run there were benefits from the divisions of power, but in the short term it was painful.

The continuous uncertainty was also very bad for Ireland, which kept getting hit by the backwash of English politics. Interventions by Anglo-Norman lords like Strongbow (Richard de Clare) might have modernised the kingdom, as the Bruce family did in Scotland. But this line of development coincided with the rule of Henry 2<sup>nd</sup>, one of the strongest-ever English kings. He was powerful enough to thwart independent developments in Ireland, and also to get official approval from the Pope for his claim to be Lord of Ireland, the papal bull *Laudabiliter*. Ireland was not strong enough to continue separately in the face of English claims, but English power was never

Gwydion M. Williams

enough to assimilate Ireland.

Ireland got caught in the cross-fire of a wider politics where the centre of gravity was always England, but Scotland played a crucial role. And it was pretty stressful for everyone, with the British Isles getting pushed down a path of development that no one had sought or foreseen.

England went through a cycle of civil wars between heirs of the sons of Edward 3<sup>rd</sup>. His heir would have been Edward the Black Prince, but he died before his father and the succession passed to Richard 2<sup>nd</sup> at the age of 10. Richard took a lax view of religion, and in this era the creed of Lollardry became important. This was a prototype Protestantism – though both this and various forms of Gnostic creed had been continuous challenges to mainstream Catholicism for most of its history. The Albigensians of southern France were a more serious problem for Rome, but not relevant to British history.

What was called Lollardry stems from the teaching of John Wycliffe. He ventured to translate parts of the Bible into Middle English, defying the official doctrine that it had to be left in an official Latin translation that only a minority could read. Thus the start of *Genesis* became:

1 In the bigynnyng God made of nouyt heuene and erthe.

2 Forsothe the erthe was idel and voide, and derknessis weren on the face of depthe; and the Spiryte of the Lord was borun on the wattris.

3 And God seide, Liyt be maad, and liyt was maad.

4 And God seiye the liyt, that it was good, and he departide the liyt fro derknessis; and he clepide the liyt,

5 *dai, and the derknessis, nyyt. And the euentid and morwetid was maad, o daie.* [A]

Wycliffe was also a believer in Consubstantiation rather than Transubstantiation. Both doctrines are rooted in the Christian metaphysics that had been elaborated from Aristotle. Both considered that the bread and wine used in Holy Communion could become substantially the body and blood of Jesus, while retaining the overt appearance of bread and wine. But Consubstantiation holds that the body and blood of Christ are present alongside the substance of the bread and wine, which remain present. Transubstantiation says it ceases to be bread and wine, apart from just appearing to be so.

More importantly, Wycliffe held that wealth was bad for the Church, and so were attempts to wield political power. This was probably why Wycliffe and some of his fellow dissenters were supported by some English nobles, notably John of Gaunt, second son of Edward 3<sup>rd</sup>. Things got more complex with the Peasants Revolt of 1381, which included an element of Lollardry but which was also a protest against the ruling class in general. Most English people at the time lacked full legal freedom: their status is nowadays called 'serfdom', but serfdom and slavery are not far apart. The full *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'serf' as 'slave or bondman' and cites David Hume's *History of England* as saying "A great part of them were serfs, and lived in a state of absolute slavery or villainage".[D] And a highly patriotic English history for children called *Our Island's Story* and written in 1905 sums it up as follows:

“The King did not keep any of his promises to the people. ‘Slaves you are, and slaves you shall remain,’ he said savagely, when the danger to himself was over. It [241] seemed as if the rising had been in vain. But that was not so. Many masters freed their slaves, and although years passed before all were free, Watt Tyler’s rebellion was the beginning of freedom for the lower classes in England.” [B]

Modern historians tend to be more evasive about the time when a majority of English people definitely were slaves. It’s more comfortable to see it as applying just to Africans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But it was much older and wider, including many criminals or rebels shipped to the West Indies, North America or Australia.

Mainstream English slavery is made to seem milder by calling it ‘serfdom’, though the distinction wasn’t often made at the time. Serfs had an advantage over other slaves only in that they were tied to a piece of land and could not legally be sold away from it. Of course legality was not always respected: Bristol’s first recorded involvement in the slave trade was as a centre for selling English slaves to Ireland:

“Archbishop Anslem, at the London Council of 1102, denounced the practice of selling Englishmen as ‘brute beasts’; his pious contemporary Bishop Wulfstand preached against the practice of selling English slaves from Bristol to Ireland.” [C]

The complex politics of the reign of Richard 2nd culminated in his deposition by John of Gaunt’s son, who became Henry 4<sup>th</sup>. Needing legitimacy, he made peace with the church and took some measures against the Lollards. Not that it became clear-cut: Sir John Oldcastle was one of a group of ‘Lollard Knights’ and also mentor to the future Henry 5<sup>th</sup>. Shakespeare’s play *Henry 5<sup>th</sup>* originally parodied Oldcastle, but some of Oldcastle’s descendents were still alive and powerful, so the character was renamed Sir John Falstaff. Here and elsewhere, Shakespeare was great at inventing memorable characters and wildly inaccurate in his history.

The early death of Henry 5<sup>th</sup> left his

son Henry 6<sup>th</sup> as infant king of England and France. But his regents made a mess of things and lost most of France – this was the context of Joan of Arc. After France was lost, Henry 6<sup>th</sup> rule was successfully challenged by Richard Duke of York, who had a plausible claim to the throne in his own right. A very complex civil war followed, culminating in Richard 3<sup>rd</sup> pushing aside his nephews to take the throne, probably murdering them though this remains disputed. His position was in any case doubtful enough to undermine support for him against Henry Tudor, a rather weak claimant in the Lancastrian line. Surprisingly, he won when Richard was killed at the Battle of Bosworth, and therefore became Henry 7<sup>th</sup>, the first Tudor. He also married Elizabeth of York, sister of the presumed-dead ‘Princes in the Tower’. Not that it is certain they were dead by then: several claimants launched rebellions claiming to be the younger of the two princes, and possibly one of them really was.

Whatever about that, Henry 7<sup>th</sup> survived and prospered. He arranged an advantageous marriage for his elder son Arthur to a Spanish princess. When this son died, the fate of Catherine of Aragon was a little uncertain. She might marry Arthur’s younger brother Henry, or perhaps not, it partly depended on whether the marriage had been consummated. A papal dispensation was required and was duly received. It seems young Henry was keener on the match than his father, who however died in his early 50s. And so the new king Henry 8<sup>th</sup> took Catherine of Aragon as his lawful wedded wife.

But was it lawful? No one seems to have doubted it for many years, and Catherine of Aragon duly gave birth to several babies suitable to carry on the line – but none of them lived. Rather, none lived except one girl called Mary. Could she inherit? Her Spanish relatives certainly thought so: her parents were Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, who had merged their realms into what became the Kingdom of Spain. But England had never had a successful female monarch: the previous attempt for a King’s daughter to succeed had led to the chaos and breakdown of the wars of Stephen and Matilda, resolved only when Matilda’s son succeeded as Henry 2<sup>nd</sup> after Stephen’s own elder son and heir

unexpectedly died.

Henry 8<sup>th</sup> needed a male heir: this was more important than his feelings for Anne Boleyn. But the pope refused to annul his marriage to his brothers’ widow, a relationship condemned in some parts of the Bible and which Henry saw as the cause of his misfortunes. Public opinion was very much for Queen Catherine against Anne Boleyn, but public opinion was a weak force in that era. Armies counted, and Queen Catherine’s relatives had armies in Italy strong enough to intimidate the pope. Her elder sister Joanne had married Charles of Hapsburg, and though Joanne went mad and never exercised any real power, their son was Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, the most powerful single ruler in Europe between the decline of Rome and the rise of Napoleon. Catherine of Aragon was his aunt, Mary Tudor his cousin, and he naturally wanted to keep Catherine as Queen and Mary as heir of England. He also oversaw the Council of Trent, which established modern Roman Catholicism with doctrines like Transubstantiation made part of the required beliefs.

Henry 8<sup>th</sup> had at times been an ally of the Hapsburgs, but it was a different matter to see his own realm swallowed up by them, which did almost happen. When he could not get papal approval to dissolve his marriage, Henry broke with Rome. This required some concessions to England’s Protestants, though nothing much. Of course Protestantism was also fragmented into rival sects with different degrees of religious radicalism. Henry preserved most Latin-Christian traditions, he just denied that the Bishop of Rome was head of the Church.

He and other critics of papal had a reasonably good case. Christianity as the established Church of the Roman Empire had had five Patriarchs, at Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem and Rome. When the Roman Empire broke up, the Christian Church fragmented into ethnic blocks. Greek-speakers dominated, but obscure theological disputes tended to become symbols for wider politics. Nestorianism became the creed of most Christians in Persia, conveniently separating them from the Roman state, Persia’s main rival. Nestorian Christians spread their creed much further



east: the mother of Kublai Khan was a Nestorian Christian and other Nestorian Christians were a major influence in the Mongol Empire created by Genghis Khan. Meantime other theological losers formed the various branches of Eastern Orthodoxy, which includes the majority of Ethiopian Christians and also the Coptic Christians of Egypt, whose liturgical language is a descendant of the tongue of the Ancient Egyptians.

The split between the Greek core and the Latin-Christian west was more complex and gradual. And it wasn't really led by Rome, which was however much the most senior church in the Latin-Christian world. It was believed that Peter the Apostle was the first Bishop of Rome, though this is open to question and it is notable that the story of Paul of Tarsus in the 'Acts of the Apostles' breaks off just before his arrival in Rome. There is a remarkable lack of early documentation about how Rome's first Christians were actually organised, and also nothing in the Bible about how either Peter or Paul died. Tradition has both of them killed in Rome by Nero in his grand persecution, but the only known accounts come long after the event.

During the Dark Ages of Latin-Christian Europe, Rome was a convenient centre and the Bishop of Rome often a useful defender of bishops against kings who wanted to dominate the Church in their realm. The Papacy was also a tempting prize for the different factions within the Church. It had also been moved to Avignon from 1309 to 1378, and a return to Rome was followed by a schism from 1378 to 1417, with rival popes at Avignon and Rome, and briefly *three* rival popes. Papal power was never the same after that, but it remained significant, though usually dominated by whoever dominated Italy.

At the time when Henry 8<sup>th</sup> wanted his marriage annulled, Emperor Charles 5<sup>th</sup> dominated Italy, Rome ruled in favour of his aunt Catherine as Queen of England and mother of the heir, and so Henry 8<sup>th</sup> repudiated Rome. He later repudiated Anne Boleyn as well, having her executed in May 1536. Catherine had died in January 1536: Anne had produced one female baby (the future Queen Elizabeth) and then miscarried

twice, possibly three times. It must have suited Henry to get rid of her, on charges of adultery, incest and witchcraft, and leave himself free to re-marry. He might also in principle have reconciled with Rome at this point, but the preceding disputes must have created enough bitterness to prevent this.

It was 'third time lucky' for Henry, his new wife Jane Seymour produced a healthy son, though she herself died. By this time England was drifting towards Protestantism, and the massive upheaval of the Dissolution of the Monasteries was beginning. Popular opinion was probably against it, but the nobility got the property, including some of those who stuck to Catholic religious views. Henry had three more marriages, the first two not of great consequence. But his final wife Catherine Parr was a genuine convert to Protestantism and influenced him in that direction. She also managed to raise his three children as a real family, despite the difference over religion and the likelihood of a future power-struggle.

The position was delicate. Henry's son was bound to succeed as Edward 6<sup>th</sup>: the validity of his mother's marriage could not be disputed. But Henry had also had Parliament confirm that his heirs after Edward were first Mary and then Elizabeth. This meant that the realm's direction might change drastically depending on who lived and who died, as fact happened. The succession would also be at risk if Henry 8<sup>th</sup> died while Edward were not old enough to rule, which also happened. Tudor males tended to be short-lived: Henry 7<sup>th</sup> died at 52, Henry 8<sup>th</sup> at 55, and Henry 8<sup>th</sup>'s maternal grandfather Edward 4<sup>th</sup> had died at 40. That early death had led to the usurpation by Richard 3<sup>rd</sup> – who was in his early 30s at the time – and the presumed murder of Edward 4<sup>th</sup>'s sons Edward 5<sup>th</sup> and his younger brother Richard.

This time round, things were less tense. Henry 7<sup>th</sup> had killed off a lot of those with royal blood, for actual or supposed treason. Among the survivors there was a strong tendency to produce girls – there is some evidence that mothers are more prone to have girls when their position is insecure, which was

true of everyone with enough royal blood to be seen as a threat or an opportunity. There were not even plausible illegitimate offspring: Henry 8<sup>th</sup> had acknowledged Henry FitzRoy as his own and made him Duke of Richmond and Somerset, but he died as a teenager. There were no plausible alternatives apart from the new king's elder sisters, and prejudice against female rulers was strong.

Edward 6<sup>th</sup> had a short but stressful reign. He was a committed Protestant, and had he lived he might have consolidated Protestantism much sooner and more solidly than actually happened. But he was too young to rule, and the Council that Henry 8<sup>th</sup> had appointed to rule for him until he was old enough was not a success, even though most of them were Protestants. It began with the king's uncle Edward Seymour taking over as regent and then having a bitter quarrel with his own brother. Thomas Seymour had married Catherine Parr, the widow of Henry 8<sup>th</sup>, but also took an interest in the young Elizabeth Tudor. This strengthened after Catherine Parr died in childbirth, and there was a bitter quarrel between the two brothers which ended with Thomas being executed as a traitor. Soon afterwards Edward Seymour was overthrown by the Council, briefly imprisoned, reinstated in a subordinate role, then executed as a traitor for having plotted to get power back. He may also have tried to defend the common people against the big land-owners, but this is disputed.

His replacement was John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, who fared little better. He might have done OK if Edward 6<sup>th</sup> had lived, but in fact he died at 15. Dudley unwisely attempted to install Lady Jane Grey as queen, after getting her married to one of his sons. This soon collapsed: most of the kingdom recognised Mary Tudor as the rightful heir. She rode into London in triumph, with her sister Elizabeth at her side.

And here, briefly, it might have seemed like a fairy-tale ending. Or might if you take a Roman Catholic view of English history. Mary had endured much and never rebelled against her father's authority, apart from refusing to give up her Catholic belief. Now she

was undisputed queen, unmarried but not yet 40, so quite capable of founding loyal Catholics line of Tudor descendants.

At first her rule was undisputed, so she pardoned 'Queen Jane'. And she was on good terms with her sister Elizabeth, though she had been a teenager when Elizabeth's mother Anne Boleyn had displaced Mary's mother Catherine of Aragon and Mary herself was for a time deemed illegitimate. She had put up with all this and was willing to be forgiving. At the start of her reign, all looked set for a glorious period in history.

### Then things went wrong.

Mary Tudor wedding Phillip of Spain was a massive error. The bulk of the population liked its own Catholic traditions but did not like foreigners. She should have wed some respectable Catholic noble, preferably an English one. Marrying the most powerful monarch in Europe made the English feel threatened with becoming a subordinate realm under Spanish dominance.

Despite this, Mary did return the realm to Catholicism. A deal was arranged whereby Catholicism was restored but monastic land seized by Henry 8<sup>th</sup> remained with its possessors. It was a weak pope who made this deal, Julius 3<sup>rd</sup>, very different from the warlike Julius 2<sup>nd</sup> who was Michelangelo's patron. Apart from the brief recovery of England, which had happened without him, Julius 3<sup>rd</sup> was chiefly noted for a suspicious relationship with a teenage beggar-boy whom he adopted and made 'Cardinal-Nephew'. Though he had had a senior position at the Council of Trent, very little was done about reform in his five-year reign. His successor Marcellus 2<sup>nd</sup> lasted just 22 days, despite being only 53. Then came Paul 4<sup>th</sup>, first of a series of popes who saved Catholicism by their highly authoritarian rule. But that was too late to help Mary Tudor.

Mary Tudor does not deserve her title of 'Bloody Mary'. She did no more killing than the other Tudors: it was the nature of politics in those days. She did blunder by having some 300 Protestants burnt as heretics, most notably Thomas Cranmer, Henry 8<sup>th</sup>'s Archbishop of

Canterbury. Cranmer had recanted and should not have been burnt under existing rules. Of course Mary had reason to hate him: he had become Archbishop without having held any previous senior office and was probably advanced because he had been the chief advocate against the validity of Catherine of Aragon's marriage. But Mary had broken the rules as they were then understood, which is not wise for any monarch to do.

Her tying of England to the Hapsburg cause and the loss of Calais to the French was another disaster, and maybe encouraged a loss of confidence in Roman Catholicism among those who were not committed to one particular religious view. Priests have always been viewed as 'Luck-Mongers', and a religion that seems unlucky will lose support.

What was really disastrous for Mary was her failure to produce an heir. Her marriage to her close cousin Phillip of Spain was foolish biologically as well as politically: the royal lines of England and Spain had intermarried several times and sterility is common when there is too much interbreeding. Worse, Mary *appeared* to become pregnant and this was generally believed to be real, but it seems to have been a 'phantom pregnancy'. She was another Tudor who died young, at the age of 42, though the stresses and failures of her reign must have contributed to her early death.

Mary Tudor was one of many sad little victims of the processes of history. She tends not to be seen as a tragic figure, but she should be, and someone should attempt a history on those lines.

The possibilities that Mary missed were realised by her sister Elizabeth, even though she came to the throne with a very weak position. Her biggest advantage was that the main alternative was Mary Queen of Scots, a descendant of Henry 7<sup>th</sup>'s daughter Margaret, whereas Lady Jane Grey and her two surviving sisters had been descendants of a younger daughter Mary. Spain did not want England and Scotland ruled by a queen with strong links to France, and also Mary Queen of Scots was an inept ruler who was suspected of murdering her first husband and who was deposed. Elizabeth's decision not to marry was po-

litically smart: she always kept the rival powers guessing, and rivalry between Spain and France was the dominant feature of Western Europe in this era.

The Stuart succession was almost an accident: Elizabeth always avoided making a decision about the succession. Lady Jane Grey's younger sisters were plausible heirs, but both died before Elizabeth. One produced a son, who was however passed over in favour of James Stuart, King of Scotland. But the Stuart line had never been entirely in control of Scotland – a surprising number of them had been deposed or murdered by other Scots, or killed in civil wars against rebels. The English state machine accepted them but was never unconditionally loyal. The 'British Wars' of the 1640s to 1660s established that no one faction could really control the state, and a balance of power was accepted. But insiders knew that there had been a lot of dishonesty, and there was a lot of private religious skepticism.

To repeat what I said earlier, if there was a destiny that shaped Great Britain's rise, then it wasn't a destiny that cared anything for Christianity in either its Protestant or Roman Catholic versions. Nor for the happiness of individual monarchs, most of whom had tough and disappointing lives. But it may have been ideal for the rise of Britain as an industrial power and as a world-empire that was content to rule overseas territories and never seriously tried to unify Europe under its rule, as the Spanish and French had done.

England had had more than 200 years of intermittent Civil War, beginning with the Wars of the Roses and ending (though no one knew this at the time) with a relatively stable Constitutional Monarchy established in 1688. During this period, no monarch felt secure and all of them executed a lot of actual or supposed traitors. There was also a continuing struggle over religion from the reign of Henry 8<sup>th</sup>, which became mixed in with dynastic and personal rivalries. When the monarchy was strong it was authoritarian and destroyed the independence of the nobility, who became courtiers.

English government became competent in the 16th century, parliamentary

in the late 17th or early 18th centuries. It was definitely not democratic before the 1880s. Current talk of 'democracy' identifies it with the Anglo system, ignoring the messy way in which this system evolved and the fact that it had fixed forms well before it became broadly democratic. The surprise is not that such a system often fails when transplanted in a finished form to alien society: the surprise is that it has quite often succeeded.

## References

[A] [<http://www.sbible.boom.ru/wyc/gen1.htm>]. This part of the Bible was probably translated by Wycliffe's associates rather than the man himself.

[B] [<http://www.mainlesson.com/display.php?author=marshall&book=isl&story=wat>]

[C] *The Slave Trade* by Hugh Thomas, Picador 1997, page 35

[D] Hume History of England. (1762) I. App. ii. 404

[E] The ruling Tudors were Henry 7th, Henry 8th and his three childless children: Edward 6th, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth Tudor.

The Stuarts in England were James 6th & 1st, his son Charles 1st, Charles's sons Charles 2nd and James 7th and 2nd. Accepting the successful rebellion of 1688 as valid, they continued with James's elder daughter Mary Stuart as co-ruler with her husband William of Orange, cousins and childless. Finally the younger daughter, Queen Anne, who had numerous unsuccessful pregnancies, several short-lived babies and one son who lived to be eleven. Had Bonnie Prince Charlie become king he would have been a sixth generation of Stuart. He and his brother both died childless. The relevant Hanoverians are the four kings called George, William 4<sup>th</sup> who was a son of George 3rd and then Victoria as daughter of another son of George 3rd. But George 3rd was the grandson of George 2nd, so it was six generations. After Victoria and Albert it was a dynasty of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, changed to Windsor in World War One,

# A Third Hungarian Revolution?

S. McGouran

Viktor Orbán is the Prime Minister of Hungary. His Fidesz (Hungarian Civil Union) party won an overwhelming two thirds of the vote in the 2010 general election (along with Christian Democrat junior partners. The fascist Jobbik (Movement — for a New Hungary) won 15% of the vote - the Social Democrats flushed themselves down the s-bend - the then PM inadvertently admitting to tape that he had incessantly lied to the electorate. The Communists, elected to power some years ago, proved themselves incapable of governing.)

Fidesz has been accused of being 'right wing' (a portmanteau phrase meaning anything the Guardian doesn't like). Ian Traynor, (the Guardian, Fri., 07.0.11) set out Orbán's and Fidesz's faults. A new Constitution is in the making, the Supreme Court has lost (unspecified) powers, and Orbán has been disrespectful to the head of the central bank. "Party cronies" will be put on the committee of the bank. They ('party cronies') already are; head of the court of auditors, chief prosecutor, and President of the Republic. This sort thing happens as a matter of course in the US, UK, and presumably, France and Germany.

The UK has been fairly subdued about Hungary's new government. France and Germany have not held back from criticism. This (and much 'international' criticism) has centred on the new laws on the media. These laws, again, are not specified in Traynor's article. He writes that they give "punitive powers to a new watchdog council staffed by Fidesz allies". In regard to the last, surely it must be difficult for Fidesz to find anyone to fill such posts? They did get two thirds of the vote, actual fascists got a good slice of the rest, and nobody will trust the Social Democrats for some time - if ever. (And, again, this sort of

thing happens in most States. In the US the local dog-catcher changes along with the Presidency.)

Other aspects of the changes of attitude to the media seem somewhat more problematical. "State television, radio, and the national news agency are being centralised...". They will be overseen by "government allies", who does Ian Traynor, (or the Guardian), think runs the BBC? They can't be unaware of 'D-notices', which drifted around Northern Ireland, like a snowstorm for decades. ('D-notices' are simple demands from the government that certain items of news not be published or broadcast). Northern Ireland was also the scene of many a non-story faked-up by the armed forces, MI5, MI6, Special Branch, and various other spooks.

There have been complaints about this media law from France and Germany, partly due to the fact that Hungary - in the person of Prime Minister Orbán - is now the President of the EU. He has taken what is politely known as a robust attitude to these criticisms. France's President Sarkozy has been told to "return to the level of reality and rational discussion", and that Hungary doesn't criticise the fact that he appoints the head of public television. The Hungarian ambassador visited Mrs Merkel. She was asked to explain criticisms of Werner Hoyer, a minister. He said Hungary ought not to be allowed to discuss the media within the EU, or consort with Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, or Ukraine. These other States, allegedly, have dubious attitudes towards press freedom.

Many Hungarian journalists and other writers have attacked the new laws. Paul Lendvai, a novelist, is one. He lives in Vienna, and has ready published a book (*My Wasted Country*) attacking the quality of Hungarian democracy over the past twenty years. Orbán points out that if Hungary were brow

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# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M Williams

## Cash-Cuckoo Land

After the crisis of 2008, people were saying that bankers would have to change. But in the West, bankers have carried on as before, playing games with trillions and collecting billions in bonus. Everyone else is having to cut back, to pay off the debts that were run up saving the banks from collapse.

Since the 1980s, Western governments have ignored the lessons of the Wall Street Crash and Great Depression. They came to believe in so-called 'Rational Economics'. But such economics is not rational at all, it sees the world as a 'Cash-Cuckoo Land' in which wealth appears from nowhere thanks to unregulated trade.

'Smart Money' made big profits. But since most of the 'Smart Money' did nothing to increase the overall wealth, a huge mass of 'Silly Money' was required to balance it. A lot of it came from naive investors, people who risked and lost money they could not afford to lose.

After the crash, there were promises of 'robust action' over bank bonuses. So far it has been about as robust as Woody Allen. In Britain and Ireland, voters have been persuaded to blame the party in power at the time. In the USA, they have been persuaded to blame the party that was not in power at the time and strengthen the same people they threw out in 2008.

Bankers justify their bonuses by mentioning all of the hard work. The public would not be willing to listen to a complaint by burglars about the hard work they do and the risks they run. Likewise some drug-dealers must be very hard-working and it is certainly a high-stress lifestyle. But burglars and drug dealers do far less damage than the current crop of bankers.

The Tory government claim to be heartbroken that they cannot stop billions being paid to bankers and have to take it away from the poor and disabled. But modern Tories come from privileged circles, the people who have done well since the 1980s. They are not there to empower ordinary people. They prefer to empower what they'd class as 'extraordinary people', which mostly means wheeler-dealers and the existing elite.

To date, Labour have been a weak opposition, not clear about what they'd do different. It remains to be seen whether this will change after Alan Johnson's sad departure and Ed Balls' move to the spot that should always have been his.

## Boomers and Coolhearts

From 1914 to 1939, Western civilisation seemed to be in

terminal decline. George Orwell was just one of many who assumed they were living in the last days of anything decent. Others took a more positive view: they accepted that both Fascism and Leninism had had justified criticisms of the older liberal-capitalist order. They also concluded that a Mixed Economy could deliver the same benefits without the need for dictatorship, at least in countries with a long tradition of constitutional government.

The quarter-century of the Mixed Economy were brilliant for the West. The big winners were France, Italy, West Germany and Japan. But both Britain and the USA grew faster than they have since Thatcher and Reagan led the drive for a restoration of capitalist norms.

Thatcher and Reagan tapped into the fear of 'corporatism'. Not, indeed, that they did anything about it. Vast impersonal corporations are much stronger now than they were in the 1980s. But the 'Baby Boomers' – the children born to adults who had had to delay family life because of World War Two – did have a broad dislike of social controls.

Boomers had set out to make the world better for everyone, not just for themselves. And I think we've been right on a lot more issues than we were wrong. Note also that it was mostly young white males trying to help women and blacks, if not entirely accepting them as equals.

Commentators who go on about the failure of 1960s radicals to match modern standards fail to ask themselves if those 'modern standards' would ever have become the norm without the original imperfect protests. Presumably they think that such reforms dropped down from heaven: it is what *they* feel, and what could be more perfect and inevitable that?

The big shifts were on race and the rights of women. An assumption of racial hierarchies was mainstream in the 1950s and had been pushed to the right-wing fringes by the 1970s. The US armies that liberated Western Europe were racially segregated: the US contingent of the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War was the first army in which black US citizens might be in command of white US citizens, something that only happened decades later in the regular army. Female pilots had always been potentially equal, but only the Soviet Union actually let them fight in World War Two.

Away from the battlefield, the Soviet Union pioneered women's rights in all sorts of sectors up to the 1960s, including sending the first women into space. But then everything seized up under Brezhnev, after Khrushchev had pointlessly antagonised large parts of the Communist movement and proved inept as a

reformer. But even as the Soviet Union lost its progressive role, the West was moving forward again.

The best of the Boomer generation the attitude of moral seriousness. A lot of others compromised on the path to power. They were encouraged by the next wave of young people, whom one might call Coolhearts. Their attitude was mostly not to make the world better for everyone: much more 'I will grab what I can for myself'. It was a return to the lower end of human nature.

Most of the Coolhearts generation did worse economically out of this lack of solidarity. The positive side of the Coolheart era was that people who believe in nothing will allow anything, so long as it does not inconvenience them. Important negative freedoms established. People cared less so you were much more free to do as you pleased, if you could pay for it.

### One Pensioner, One Bullet?

As people live longer, the working-age population shrinks relative to the rest. And so what? If the same number of people can produce more wealth with less work, why should there be a problem?

The problem arises from thinking as a mass of competitive individuals rather than as a community. From a suspicion of the state and the acceptance of private wealth as 'natural'. So the some of the working-age population are persuaded that their problems are due to the older generation somehow messing things up.

If wealth was still as equal as it was in the 1960s and 1970s, there would be no problem. We could all have a lot more leisure, which was a real expectation in the 1950s and 1960s.

The problem is not lack of wealth in the society. It is the fact that a lot of that wealth goes to a small upper stratum, whose demands are unlimited. Having mostly acquired this wealth rather than inherited it, they are much less likely to be satisfied or to be responsible. They are not a true ruling class, they are a mere Overclass, not in control but able

to manipulate public greed.

### Feed The Rich – the Multiplication of Millionaires

There are some 2,800,000 million dollar millionaires in the USA today, and more than 480,000 in the UK. There are some 10 million globally, including more than a thousand billionaires.

In both the USA and Britain, the richest 1% approximates to dollar millionaires. This is worth emphasising, since surveys reveal that about a quarter of US citizens believe that they are part of the richest 1%, and another quarter expect to get there. If the Actually-Rich work to protect their own interests, a huge chunk of the Working Mainstream think that their own interests are being served by free-wheeling capitalism.

Note also that there are complexities in defining who is a millionaire. *The Economist* sums it up neatly:

"Most people would describe a dollar millionaire as rich, yet many millionaires would disagree. They do not compare themselves with teachers or shop assistants but with the other parents at their children's private schools. To count the number of rich people in the world, however, an arbitrary cut-off point is needed, and \$1m is as good as any. Capgemini, a consultancy, defines anyone with investable assets of \$1m or more (excluding their home) as a 'high-net-worth individual', consultant-speak for rich. By this conservative measure the planet has about 10m millionaires, according to Capgemini and Merrill Lynch, a bank.

"Credit Suisse, another bank, uses a less stringent (and more obvious) definition: a millionaire is anyone whose net assets exceed \$1m. That includes everything: a home, an art collection, even the value of an as-yet-inaccessible pension scheme. The Credit Suisse 'Global Wealth Report' estimates that there were 24.2m such people in mid-2010, about 0.5% of the world's adult population. By this measure, there are more millionaires than there are Australians. They control \$69.2 trillion in assets, more than a third of the global total. Some 41% of them

live in the United States, 10% in Japan and 3% in China." [B]

Someone who counts as a millionaire if their house and pension funds are included is pretty rich by most standards, but outside the richest 1%. And within the Overclass, a small number of very rich individuals have the bulk of the power and influence:

"You do not have to be a genius to build a million-dollar business, but it helps if you are intelligent and extremely hard-working. In their book *The Millionaire Next Door*', Thomas Stanley and William Danko observed that a typical American millionaire is surprisingly ordinary. He has spent his life patiently saving and ploughing his money into a business he founded. He does not live in the fanciest part of town—why waste money that you can invest? And his tastes are so plain that you can barely tell him apart from his neighbours. He buys \$40 shoes, and his car of choice is a Ford...

"The global wealth pyramid has a very wide base and a sharp point. The richest 1% of adults control 43% of the world's assets; the wealthiest 10% have 83%. The bottom 50% have only 2%. This suggests a huge disparity of influence. The wealthiest tenth control the vast bulk of the world's capital, giving them a lot of say in funding businesses, charities and politicians. The bottom 50% control hardly any capital at all.

"That said, this huge group includes people in quite different circumstances. Many young people in rich countries have no assets and a wallet full of maxed-out credit cards. Technically, their debts make them poorer than African peasants who have nothing. But they enjoy a much higher standard of living and far better prospects. In Denmark and Sweden a startling 30% of the population say their debts exceed their assets, but few go hungry. Many have simply taken out large student loans which an indulgent government allows them to repay very gradually.

"At the apex of the pyramid there are 81,000 people with assets of more than \$50m. Of these, some 30,000 have more than \$100m and 2,800 have more than

\$500m. Nestled into the sharp tip at the top, Credit Suisse reckons there are about 1,000 dollar billionaires.” [B]

### Who Rules The USA?

The biggest winners in the West since the 1980s have been the richest 10%, and especially the richest 1%. You could see this as a mysterious conspiracy that has somehow subverted democracy:

“How has a tiny fraction of the population – which is diverse in many ways – arranged for their narrowest economic interests to dominate the economic interests of the vast majority? And, while they’re at it, endanger the economic well-being of our nation, and bring the financial system of the whole world to the brink of collapse.

“They have money.

“We have votes.

“Theoretically, that means we should have the government. Theoretically, government should be a countervailing force against the excesses of big money, take the long view for the good of the nation, and watch out for the majority. Let alone for the poor and downtrodden.

“What we actually have is one political party that is flat out the party of big money and another party that sells out to big money.” (*How Can the Richest 1 Percent Be Winning This Brutal Class War Against 99% of Us?* [C])

You could equally ask, why do vast numbers of ordinary people buy lottery tickets, enabling a very small number of individuals to become instant millionaires? Except it is bloody obvious for the lottery: each gambler hopes to be the next big winner, and maybe the pleasure they get from their false hopes makes up for the price of their tickets. It’s just the same in the wider economy, except that the relationships are more complex.

If the Actually-Rich work to protect their own interests, a huge chunk of the Working Mainstream think that their own interests are being served. Including the unlucky investors in Enron who

believed that their savings had yielded them unearned millions. Or all of those – most of them already part of the Actually-Rich yet still greedy for more – who invested with Madoff. Most of those he ‘reluctantly’ allowed to invest with him must have supposed that his implausible returns were a cheat with themselves as beneficiaries. Instead they found themselves victims – but this has happened many times in history and I’d be very surprised if people like Madoff didn’t continue to flourish for as long as free-wheeling finance is tolerated.

One major problem in the USA is that socialist parties failed to grow. The Republicans were once progressive but then got taken over by business interests. The Democrats under Roosevelt carried through what were actually socialist measures, but never discarded old-fashioned liberal ideology, which was well past its sell-by date.

What’s worse is that almost all US citizens believe that their late-18th century constitution defined a near-perfect republic. They proudly quote Jefferson as saying:

“Yes, we did produce a near-perfect republic. But will they keep it? Or will they, in the enjoyment of plenty, lose the memory of freedom? Material abundance without character is the path of destruction.”

I’ve no idea if the Jefferson quote would look different in context: in modern politics it counts mostly as a quote that US citizens love to use. They overlook that this ‘near-perfect republic’ was a republic where chattel slavery was expanding fast, where the original owners of the land were being robbed and often exterminated, where no women had the vote and where not all white males had the vote. And where local gentry like Jefferson were in charge until the second wave of democratisation under Andrew Jackson. Jackson’s Vice-President was John C. Calhoun, pioneer of the idea that negro slavery was an inherently good system that should never be abolished. This view led on to the bitter Civil War of the 1860s.

### Twenty Years On

There’s an old joke about the one reliable method to go gambling in Las Vegas and return with a small fortune. You go there with a large fortune.

The West since 1991 has been like that. Gorbachev had inherited a superpower and left behind chaos. Yeltsin inherited this chaos and left behind an impoverished and humiliated Russia. Yeltsin handed over to Putin, as the West was flabbergasted that Russia no longer liked them and was happy with Putin’s new approach, which stopped the decline and treated the West as a rival. We now have some commentators whining about their bad fortune, but utterly failing to understand where they went wrong

“Aren’t the mistakes, missteps, and sheer missed opportunities of these 20 years inexcusable? And might not there be an explanation? In one of the last interviews he gave before his death, Judt said something that haunts me: ‘My generation has been catastrophic. I was born in 1948 so I’m more or less the same age as George W Bush, Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, Gerhard Schröder, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown – a pretty crappy generation, when you come to think of it. It’s a generation that grew up in the 1960s in western Europe or in America, in a world of no hard choices.’

“Well, his generation is mine, and ‘no hard choices’ is exactly right. We were incredibly lucky. We grew up in what the French call *les trentes glorieuses*, the astonishing three decades that followed 1945, with unimagined prosperity and an all-nourishing state that provided health-care and education. To cap it all, and make us softer still, we enjoyed unprecedented personal freedoms.

“Then came that supposed complete victory for the west. But by then we had taken over, and what a horrible mess we’ve made. If there’s any hope at all, it must be that our crappy generation can slink away in shame, and let a younger generation see if they can manage things better. They could scarcely do worse.” [D]

Has the man forgotten about the 1980s? How Thatcher and Reagan bad-mouthed those ‘astonishing three decades’ and insisted that a return to classical

capitalism was urgently necessary? In the West, quite a bit of damage has been done by such pig-headed politics, with the possibility now of the UK suffering a 'double dip' thanks to Tory obsessions with balancing the budget. Russia has now been lost to the West. China sticks to its own very successful Mixed Economy, and sees no need to listen to Western folly.

### Life after the End of History

Having announced the 'end of history' in the early 1990s, Francis Fukuyama has now moved on. As Pompey the Great remarked to his elderly mentor Sulla, men worship the rising sun rather than the setting sun. Japan once seemed like the next superpower, but hung onto the 'Honorary White' status that it acquired in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Japan also yielded to US pressure to drop its own successful methods and adopt the USA's foolishness, producing a crisis that has not yet been resolved..

China has so far avoided Japan's errors, forming part of a block of rising powers – Brazil, the Republic of India and South Africa – as well as teaming up with damaged-but-powerful Russia. And Fukuyama is now praising them, at least conditionally:

"The first decade of the 21-century has seen a dramatic reversal of fortune in the relative prestige of different political and economic models. Ten years ago, on the eve of the puncturing of the dotcom bubble, the US held the high ground. Its democracy was widely emulated, if not always loved; its technology was sweeping the world; and lightly regulated 'Anglo-Saxon' capitalism was seen as the wave of the future. The US managed to fritter away that moral capital in remarkably short order: the Iraq war and the close association it created between military invasion and democracy promotion tarnished the latter, while the Wall Street financial crisis put paid to the idea that markets could be trusted to regulate themselves.

"China, by contrast, is on a roll. President Hu Jintao's rare state visit to Washington this week comes at a time when many Chinese see their weather-

ing of the financial crisis as a vindication of their own system, and the beginning of an era in which US-style liberal ideas will no longer be dominant. State-owned enterprises are back in vogue, and were the chosen mechanism through which Beijing administered its massive stimulus. The automatic admiration for all things American that many Chinese once felt has given way to a much more nuanced and critical view of US weaknesses – verging, for some, on contempt. It is thus not surprising that polls suggest far more Chinese think their country is going in the right direction than their American counterparts.

"But what is the Chinese model? Many observers casually put it in an 'authoritarian capitalist' box, along with Russia, Iran and Singapore. But China's model is sui generis; its specific mode of governance is difficult to describe, much less emulate, which is why it is not up for export.

"The most important strength of the Chinese political system is its ability to make large, complex decisions quickly, and to make them relatively well, at least in economic policy. This is most evident in the area of infrastructure, where China has put into place airports, dams, high-speed rail, water and electricity systems to feed its growing industrial base. Contrast this with India, where every new investment is subject to blockage by trade unions, lobby groups, peasant associations and courts. India is a law-governed democracy, in which ordinary people can object to government plans; China's rulers can move more than a million people out of the Three Gorges Dam flood plain with little recourse on their part.

"Nonetheless, the quality of Chinese government is higher than in Russia, Iran, or the other authoritarian regimes with which it is often lumped – precisely because Chinese rulers feel some degree of accountability towards their population. That accountability is not, of course, procedural; the authority of the Chinese Communist party is limited neither by a rule of law nor by democratic elections. But while its leaders limit public criticism, they do try to stay on top of popular discontents, and shift policy in response. They are most

attentive to the urban middle class and powerful business interests that generate employment, but they respond to outrage over egregious cases of corruption or incompetence among lower-level party cadres too.

"Indeed, the Chinese government often overreacts to what it believes to be public opinion precisely because, as one diplomat resident in Beijing remarked, there are no institutionalised ways of gauging it, such as elections or free media. Instead of calibrating a sensible working relationship with Japan, for example, China escalated a conflict over the detention of a fishing boat captain last year – seemingly in anticipation of popular anti-Japanese sentiment.

"Americans have long hoped China might undergo a democratic transition as it got wealthier, and before it became powerful enough to become a strategic and political threat. This seems unlikely, however. The government knows how to cater to the interests of Chinese elites and the emerging middle classes, and builds on their fear of populism. This is why there is little support for genuine multi-party democracy. The elites worry about the example of democracy in Thailand – where the election of a populist premier led to violent conflict between his supporters and the establishment – as a warning of what could happen to them.

"Ironically for a country that still claims to be communist, China has grown far more unequal of late. Many peasants and workers share little in the country's growth, while others are ruthlessly exploited. Corruption is pervasive, which exacerbates existing inequalities. At a local level there are countless instances in which government colludes with developers to take land away from hapless peasants. This has contributed to a pent-up anger that explodes in many thousands of acts of social protest, often violent, each year.

"The Communist party seems to think it can deal with the problem of inequality through improved responsiveness on the part of its own hierarchy to popular pressures. China's great historical achievement during the past two millennia has been to create high-

quality centralised government, which it does much better than most of its authoritarian peers. Today, it is shifting social spending to the neglected interior, to boost consumption and to stave off a social explosion. I doubt whether its approach will work: any top-down system of accountability faces unsolvable problems of monitoring and responding to what is happening on the ground. Effective accountability can only come about through a bottom-up process, or what we know as democracy. This is not, in my view, likely to emerge soon. However, down the road, in the face of a major economic downturn, or leaders who are less competent or more corrupt, the system's fragile legitimacy could be openly challenged. Democracy's strengths are often most evident in times of adversity." [E]

### **Government Of the People, For the People, By the People**

China currently meets the famous definition of democracy that Lincoln set out the Gettysburg Address. And China has also concluded that the modern version of Western-style democracy is bad news, and with good reason.

"The nearly two-month head-to-head contest for presidency between former Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo and former Prime Minister Alassane Outtara isn't likely to come to an end soon.

"The subsequent bloody conflicts have severely endangered the country's stability and people's wellbeing...

"In 1990, under the influence and pressure of Western countries, Cote d'Ivoire imported Western-style democracy and held a multi-party presidential election.

"But the country since then has suffered political instability and occasional bloody conflicts.

"Two coups occurred in 1999 and 2002. The first ousted then President Henri Konan Bedie, while the second was foiled by President Gbagbo but plunged the country into a north-south civil war, which lasted until 2007.

"Over the past two decades, conflict

has invariably followed a presidential election at the cost of human lives.

"Cote d'Ivoire was a reasonably developed economy in sub-Saharan Africa before 1990, but its economic growth has stagnated and people's living conditions haven't improved noticeably since.

"Similar problems plague many African countries. After the Cold War, the majority of African nations practised Western-style democracy, which is characterized by multi-party elections, but many countries have yet to taste the expected fruits.

"In the few years since the end of 2007, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mauritania, Guinea and Madagascar have suffered coups or election-related violence. Tunisia is currently suffering from bloody conflict and chaos.

"Political stability, violent conflicts or insurgency also have taken place in many countries with Western-style democracy outside of Africa, such as Iraq in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan in central Asia, Thailand in Southeast Asia and Haiti in central America.

"There are several factors behind the phenomenon.

"First, there are no sound political mechanisms and widely accepted 'game rules' in presidential elections or political circles. It is routine, when election officials declare a winner, for other candidates to reject the result and call for protests, which trigger bloody conflicts.

"Second, leaders of some parties or cliques, who control the military, judicial departments and media, may rig elections, refuse to step down after apparent defeat in elections, or even launch coups to snatch power.

"Third, there are vehement ethnic, regional or religious contradictions between different groups. The contests between different parties in elections or political affairs may deteriorate into bloody conflicts of the groups that support their respective parties." (*Western-style democracy not cure-all medicine*, [J])

So what's the alternative? For now,

the Communist Party remains firmly in control. It has done what no other ruling Communist Party managed: a peaceful hand-over of the top jobs without discrediting the old leadership. It seems set to repeat the process in 2012. And most Chinese seem entirely comfortable with the system as it is.

Harassment by the Western media is all done in the name of 'Human Rights'. Hu Jintao seemed to have made concessions during his recent visit to the USA, but in fact he did not, as at least one journalist noted:

"Chinese President Hu Jintao faced a rare public question on human rights at the press conference

"It was, unquestionably, the most important public moment of Hu Jintao's visit to the US so far. The moment President Hu Jintao was put on the spot about China's human rights record.

"His answer, when it finally came, was illuminating. But, I'd like to suggest, that some of the significance has been missed, some misread....

"China's leader read from pre-prepared notes. It wasn't the most confident or the most convincing display of statesmanship.

"But again there is something significant here that has perhaps been overlooked. The fact Hu Jintao had his answer already scripted is I think worth noting...

"So the answer was not strident or confrontational, but an attempt to sound unthreatening, a little humble even. It's the attempt to strike a new tone that is important.

"But this wasn't an 'unprecedented admission' as some have painted it. Here I think the significance of what President Hu said has been misread.

"On any occasion like this Chinese diplomats put a lot of store by the precise phrasing of public statements, so it's worth looking at Mr Hu's exact words.

"China is a developing country with a huge population, and also a developing country in a crucial stage of reform. In



this context China still faces many challenges in economic and social development, and a lot still needs to be done in China in terms of human rights,' was what the official translator said.

"The important thing here is the repeated stress on 'development'. China's leaders don't see human rights the same way most in the West do. They define improving human rights as improving living standards, lifting people out of poverty." [K]

China is in fact doing a good job in Africa as well as at home:

"Western countries have been offering the wrong thing. Providing food aid or money isn't enough because food is more than calories, it is a way of life. What Africa needs is technical help, and that is coming mainly from Brazil, India and China. China now has agricultural experts in 35 African countries, Brazil has supplied knowledge from its own agricultural modernisation, and India is supplying technology to provide communications and land-based satellite information." [N]

I'd have thought food was the most basic human right of all. The West tends to define 'Human Rights' mostly in terms of the rights of journalists, lawyers and pro-Western dissidents. If you read the original Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it goes much wider than that. [L] Article 5 – "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" – has been massively breached in the so-called 'War Against Terrorism'. Article 22 specifies a "right to social security". Article 23 specifies a "right to work", something that the USA and Western Europe genuinely offered up to the 1980s and then dropped. Article 25 says:

"(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

"(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection." [L]

All of these were things the West could manage up until the 1980s. Since then, a much richer society has been persuaded that such rights are impossibly expensive. And there has been a bitter determination to impose the same sort of mess on the rest of the world.

### Party Rule

Identifying the current rule of the Chinese Communist Party with the former rule of the Confucian mandarins is a piece of fool's wisdom that you hear from many 'experts' nowadays. China's traditional government stopped at the level of the country: the central government appointed governors of provinces – most of them as big as European nations – and also appointed governors of cities and counties below them. But the traditional administrative machine stopped there, one official with a small staff per county or city.

When the traditional system collapsed in 1911, there was nothing to replace it except the modernised armies that the traditional government had formed in its last decades. These armies had little idea how to rule, and became warlords. Sun Yatsen and other reformers found themselves powerless – they had a nominal majority in a newly created parliament, but hardly anyone took that parliament seriously. A western account written in 1918 reveals why:

"The Parliament of China is ... elected by means of a property and educational franchise which is estimated to give about four million voters (1 per cent of the population) although in practice relatively few vote." [F]

Something closer to democracy emerged when Sun Yatsen remodelled the Kuomintang on Leninist line and brought in Chinese Communists to make it something like a mass movement. But Sun Yatsen died with his dreams incomplete. There was at first no clear successor, but Chiang Kai-shek controlled

the army and led a right-wing take-over that refused to fight the imperial powers dominating China and instead massacred thousands of left-wing Chinese. He was aided by Shanghai's Green Gang, drug-dealing gangsters who coexisted with British and French sovereignty over the core of Shanghai. The Kuomintang later flirted with fascism, but never became a mass party even to the degree which Italian and German fascism managed it. As left-wing journalist Agnes Smedley observed:

"Somewhere in the heaps of propaganda literature I had read that the Kuomintang had 39,000 members. I asked an official if this referred to the whole country or only Nanking. He looked uneasy and answered evasively. The fact was that the Kuomintang had only 39,000 members out of a population of 450,000,000 people, that it had become, in other words, a small closed corporation of government officials and their subordinates." [H]

That would be 1 in 11,000, no way to run a modern society. And the Kuomintang was never serious about running a modern society, it just squatted on top of the chaos that had resulted from the 1911 Revolution. Later success in Taiwan was thanks to its control of an island that had been run by the Japanese from 1895 to 1945 and was part of the ruthless but efficient modernisation led by Japan.

Chinese communism was different. It gave ordinary Chinese the right to vote for the first time ever, electing leaders at a village level where everyone understood the issues. Higher-level coordination occurs through the Communist Party, which avoids destructive factionalism in what is quite a diverse society. It works and large numbers of people are involved in it:

"As a political machine alone, the Party is a phenomenon of awesome and unique dimensions. By mid-2009, its membership stood at 75 million, equal to about one in twelve adult Chinese." [G]

The party's function – still continuing – has been transmitting the useful aspects of Western knowledge down to

a fairly basic level.

### Europe Freezes, the World Warms

Climate sceptics need to be reminded that meteorologists do not cause the weather, they merely try to understand its complexities.

In Fred Hoyle's SF novel *The Black Cloud*, one of the scientists says to the Prime Minister that all along the politicians had been hoping that events would be less serious than the scientific warnings. They had left out the possibility that they might be worse.

It is true that climate scientists haven't done a good job handling global publicity. That's not their area of expertise, and they lose out to 'spin doctors' who specialise in plausible half-truths. But that's irrelevant to whether something major is actually happening with the weather, and it clearly now is.

"Is there any link between the terrible floods in Australia and Brazil? Yes – La Niña. Weather throughout the southern hemisphere is affected by the periodic oscillation between warming (El Niño) and cooling (La Niña) of surface waters in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. The past few months have seen one of the most intense La Niña events on record. How does La Niña cause floods? The changing atmospheric circulation redistributes the rainfall. High pressure reduces the normally heavy precipitation over the tropical and subtropical Pacific. Instead of falling on the sea the rain lands on continental landmasses on the ocean margins.

"Although eastern Australia is particularly vulnerable, 'La Niña tends to intensify all the monsoon systems in the southern hemisphere... Besides Brazil, there has also been serious flooding this month in the Philippines, Sri Lanka and South Africa. We have had a La Niña every few years since climate records began. Is this one unusual? It is the most intense La Niña at least since the 1973-74 event, which caused the last devastating Brisbane floods. Is climate change responsible? That is, of course, a controversial question. Some climatologists say the event falls within the expected range

of natural variability.

"Others say that, while La Niña would have appeared anyway, global warming has exacerbated its impact. Evidence supporting that claim comes from the fact that the water temperatures off the north-east coast of Australia have never been higher since records began. Warmer seas mean more moisture evaporating into the atmosphere and therefore heavier rainfall. To what extent can we blame human activity for the death and destruction? Even if man-made climate change is not a factor, population density and shoddy building practices are – and not just in the shanty towns that are all too often hit by floods in the developing world.

"Once Queensland has begun to recover from the impact of its floods, there will be soul-searching over the way housing has been built on natural flood plains. Australia has been too preoccupied in recent years with drought, failing to recognise that flooding too has historically been a peril.

"Looking further ahead, if you trust the majority of climatologists who believe in man-made climate change, the only thing that can be predicted with reasonable confidence is that meteorological extremes will occur more frequently" [M]

In Britain, we had several years of very hot summers and mild winters, starting in the 1990s. Over the last three years we have had a shift, summers were still hotter than usual, but winters became cold again:

"2010 was the twelfth-coldest year in the 100-year series and the coldest since 1986. This resulted mainly from cold weather in January, February, late November and, especially, December – which was one of the coldest calendar months in the last 100 years. Only April and June saw any prolonged warm weather widely." [P]

But that's just Britain, just a bubble of cold in North-Western Europe:

"Global surface temperatures in 2010 tied 2005 as the warmest on record, according to an analysis released Jan. 12,

2011 by researchers at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) in New York....

"The next warmest years are 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007 and 2009, which are statistically tied for third warmest year. The GISS records begin in 1880...

"A chilly spell also struck this winter across northern Europe. The event may have been influenced by the decline of Arctic sea ice and could be linked to warming temperatures at more northern latitudes.

"Arctic sea ice acts like a blanket, insulating the atmosphere from the ocean's heat. Take away that blanket, and the heat can escape into the atmosphere, increasing local surface temperatures. Regions in northeast Canada were more than 18 degrees warmer than normal in December.

"The loss of sea ice may also be driving Arctic air into the middle latitudes. Winter weather patterns are notoriously chaotic, and the GISS analysis finds seven of the last 10 European winters warmer than the average from 1951 to 1980. The unusual cold in the past two winters has caused scientists to begin to speculate about a potential connection to sea ice changes." [Q]

"The year 2010 ranked as the warmest year on record, together with 2005 and 1998, according to the World Meteorological Organization. Data received by the WMO show no statistically significant difference between global temperatures in 2010, 2005 and 1998...

"2010 was an exceptionally warm year over much of Africa and southern and western Asia, and in Greenland and Arctic Canada, with many parts of these regions having their hottest years on record.

"Over land few parts of the world were significantly cooler than average in 2010, the most notable being parts of northern Europe and central and eastern Australia.

"December 2010 was exceptionally warm in eastern Canada and Greenland. It was abnormally cold through large

parts of northern and western Europe, with monthly mean temperatures as much as 10°C below normal at some locations in Norway and Sweden. Many places in Scandinavia had their coldest December on record. December in Central England was the coldest since 1890. Heavy snowfalls severely disrupted transport in many parts of Europe. It was also colder than average in large parts of the Russian Federation and in the eastern United States, where snow also severely disrupted transport.”[R]

“The extreme warmth in Northeast Canada is undoubtedly related to the fact that Hudson Bay was practically ice free. In the past, including the GISS base period 1951-1980, Hudson Bay was largely ice-covered in November. The contrast of temperatures at coastal stations in years with and without sea ice cover on the neighboring water body is useful for illustrating the dramatic effect of sea ice on surface air temperature. Sea ice insulates the atmosphere from ocean water warmth, allowing surface air to achieve temperatures much lower than that of the ocean. It is for this reason that some of the largest positive temperature anomalies on the planet occur in the Arctic Ocean as sea ice area has decreased in recent years.

“The cold anomaly in Northern Europe in November has continued and strengthened in the first half of December. Combined with the unusual cold winter of 2009-2010 in Northern Hemisphere mid-latitudes, this regional cold spell has caused widespread commentary that global warming has ended. That is hardly the case. On the contrary, globally November 2010 is the warmest November in the GISS record.” [S]

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# Parliament Notes

## Dick Barry

### Commie Bashing

Last November (23rd) North Korea launched a missile attack on South Korea's Yeonpyeong island which killed two civilians and two military personnel. The attack was in response to a military exercise by South Korea during which live artillery was fired close to the disputed sea border with North Korea. Naturally the West, notably Britain and the USA, criticised North Korea as if the attack on Yeonpyeong island, which incidentally is closer to mainland North Korea than to South Korea, had been entirely without cause. And that is how Foreign Secretary William Hague and Labour's Shadow Foreign Office Minister Emma Reynolds both saw it. In a brief exchange on the issue on 14 December last, Reynolds told Hague that, "The Opposition welcome the Foreign Secretary's condemnation of North Korea's recent **unprovoked** attacks on South Korea and I should like to associate myself with the comments he made a moment ago." (my emphasis).

When the Western media's criticism of North Korea had subsided, South Korea admitted that it, not North Korea, had fired the first shots. Naturally, this received little media coverage. North Korea may be a paranoid state, but not without good reason, and probably believed it was under attack from its southern neighbour. This paranoia is fuelled by the United States' support for South Korea and its listing of North Korea as one of an axis of evil. One would therefore expect South Korea to be a little sensitive to this, but less than a week after Reynolds had accused North Korea of an unprovoked attack, South Korea carried out a second military exercise in the same area. On that occasion North Korea, taking heed no doubt of China's call for restraint, did nothing. Strangely, Reynolds has said nothing about North Korea's restraint. Perhaps a little less rhetorical condemnation and a little more effective engagement with North Korea is called for. But this may be beyond Cold War Warrior Reynolds' imagination.

On 14 December, Foreign Secretary Hague told MPs that, "Tensions are likely to remain high until North Korea abandons its provocative behaviour and violation of UN resolutions, and creates conditions for the resumption of talks by making verifiable progress towards de-nuclearisation." Fear of a nuclear North Korea partly explains the West's attitude. But is it justified? Were Hague and/or Reynolds aware of a report by Dr. Sig Hecker, former head of the Los Alamos Nuclear Laboratory (New Mexico), who visited North Korea's nuclear facilities two weeks before South Korea's first military exercise? According to the CNN Opinion website of 23 November, Dr. Hecker "detailed how the new facilities, while potentially capable of producing material for bombs, are hardly the quickest route for North Korea to do so. The facility Hecker visited could only produce one or two bombs' worth of material a year, it is not clear when it will be fully operational and it has been built to replace the plutonium production facilities, not add to them. The new, small light-water reactor under construction is actually not very good for producing weapons-grade plutonium."

CNN Opinion's summary of Hecker's report says that, "Finally, the North Koreans said they would scrap their plutonium capabilities completely in exchange for improved relations with the United States. In short, it is conceivable that the facilities are what the North claims, its attempt at home-grown nuclear energy, a goal the North had had for decades." But on 23 November Hague appeared to be in two minds about further discussions with North Korea. Initially, he told MPs that, "Talks between relevant parties offer the best prospect for achieving a resolution of the dispute, but cannot succeed without trust." However in his concluding comments he said, "I do not think that an immediate return to the six-party talks is the way forward as that would be, in a sense, a reward for North Korea's behaviour. Other discussions and other ways for-

ward will have to be found." As she was no doubt of the same opinion, Reynolds failed to ask him what he meant by his last remark.

### By George, We'll Have It!

In L&TUR No. 203 (Dec/Jan 2009), Parliament Notes referred to a Bill introduced by Tory MP Andrew Rosindell which called for our glorious Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 to be celebrated throughout the UK and all its overseas territories. Little has been heard of this since but one can be sure that someone, somewhere, is preparing the propaganda and hype to be released when most of the country is in the depths of economic despair. However, not content with paying homage to a hereditary monarch, (couldn't we just elect our monarchs using the Alternative Vote?), another, newly elected, Tory MP, Nadhim Zahawi, an Iraqi Kurd, was given leave on 15 December to introduce a Bill 'to designate St George's Day, or the nearest working day, as an annual public holiday in England with effect from 2012; to designate St David's Day, or the nearest working day, as an annual public holiday in Wales with effect from 2012; and for connected purposes.'

Zahawi supported his Bill with the following gem: "We all know St George as the famous dragon slayer whose bravery freed a town from the tyranny of a vicious dragon and eventually led the townsfolk to Christianity. I have to point out, however, that St George was an immigrant to this country. St George is widely believed to have been born in Turkey and served in the Roman army before being taken into English hearts. My hon. Friend the Father of the House, who is an expert on that region, tells me that he may even have been of Kurdish origin - I speculate further that his skin may have been my shade of tan." Hans Christian Anderson couldn't have scripted it better.

There is no evidence that St George

ever set foot in England, and it should be noted that were he alive today, as a non-European, he may not be allowed in under the Coalition's new immigration rules. Zahawi has simply regurgitated the tale about George and the dragon brought back to England by Crusaders, who themselves heard it second hand. However, Zahawi was right about one thing when he said that what St George stood for is just as relevant today as it was way back then. What he stood for was the invasion and conquest of other countries; quintessentially English values.

Just when one thinks one's heard enough about commemorative events, another one comes along to assault one's ears. Not being a Bible reader, it hadn't occurred to me that this year is the 400th anniversary of the King James version of the Bible, (presumably another one had to be written because the previous version got one or two things wrong; like the number and species of animals aboard Noah's ark), but one can always rely on an MP to remind one. Labour's Hugh Bayley asked, on 18 January, "What steps the Church Commissioner are taking to assist in the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the King James version of the Bible?" Tony Baldry, The Second Church Commissioner, told him, *inter alia*, that, "The 2011 celebrations were launched at Hampton Court and the King James Bible Trust, chaired by the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr Field), has been set up to oversee the programme of events and activities planned around the world to mark 400 years since the creation of the book that changed the world." Changed the world? Well, I suppose it did in the sense that adherents to it spread wide scale mayhem and murder. But most nominal Christians are indifferent to the Bible and certainly won't have read it.

However, Hugh Bayley and Tony Baldry clearly think otherwise, making further absurd claims about it. Baldry told MPs that, "The Church Commissioners will give every possible support to the trust because, as the hon. Gentleman says, no book has had a greater influence on the English language. It is a masterpiece of literature that unites English-speaking people everywhere." Except, of course, English-speaking

Catholics, who prefer the New Testament. And has its influence on the English language been greater than the works of Shakespeare, for example? In support of this overblown statement Baldry said that his favourite phrase from this "masterpiece of literature" is: "My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." Thus proving himself to be a prize prick.

### By Keith, They'll Get It!

Labour's Keith Vaz is not only, in his own words, "a fervent monarchist", he clearly believes that Queens have made a better stab at the job than have Kings, and he cites Elizabeth 1, Victoria and the present incumbent as proof of this. Consequently, in the interests of "gender equality", of course, he wants succession to the throne by "male preference primogeniture" to end. On 18 January, to facilitate this, he begged to move, "That leave be given to bring in a Bill to remove any distinction between the sexes in determining the succession to the Crown." In support of his aim he told MPs, "At the centre of this debate is a great principle: gender equality."

In case anyone doubts his admiration for female monarchs he told MPs that "Three of the country's longest-serving and most successful monarchs have been women. The 58 year reign of Elizabeth 1 during that golden age, and Queen Victoria's 64 year reign, when Britannia ruled the waves, are only two examples", he said. Actually, the first Elizabeth ruled for 45 years (1558-1603). It's true that "Britannia ruled the waves" in the second half of the 19th century, during Victoria's reign, when the British Empire doubled in size. But it must be said that this was at the expense of many thousands of deaths of people who the British believed were members of inferior races. And one thing Vaz forgot to mention: Queen Victoria was opposed to giving women the vote.

### Protest In Peace

In the last L&TUR (No. 213 Dec/Jan) Parliament Notes commented upon the student demonstrations of 10 and 24 November and noted that while not one

MP spoke about the brutal behaviour of some police officers, many were only too eager to condemn the violence of a small minority of student demonstrators. PNs asked if no MP will speak out about police behaviour. MPs were given a further chance to do so when Home Secretary Teresa May made a statement on 13 December about the student protests of 9 December. She told the House of Commons that the statement concerned, "the appalling violence that took place during last week's protests outside Parliament." Naturally, the violence she referred to was perpetrated by demonstrators and not the police, even though the effects of the latter were more serious and included a baton strike to the head of a student, resulting in a severe brain injury, and the separation from his wheelchair by police officers of a cerebral palsy sufferer.

May told MPs that, "Thursday's police operation involved 2,800 officers. More than 30 officers were injured, of whom six required hospital treatment. All six have been discharged from hospital. Forty-three protestors were injured. The Independent Police Complaints Commission has begun an independent investigation into the incident that left one protestor seriously injured. Right hon. and hon. members will understand that it is not appropriate for me to comment further on that incident while the IPCC investigation is ongoing." Perhaps not, but backbench MPs are free to do so, yet only Labour's David Winnick out of 32 MPs who spoke, referred to the striking of 20 year old Alfie Meadows with a police baton that left him requiring brain surgery. And you can bet your life that had it been a police officer requiring emergency surgery, Teresa May would have been first in a long line of MPs to condemn the person responsible before any investigation into the incident had begun.

But not only did May refuse to criticise the brutal behaviour of some officers, she actually agreed with Tory backbencher Charlie Elphicke, who referred to the demonstrators as "a feral mob", that the police exercised restraint. She told him that, "The police very bravely faced significant provocation last Thursday, and they did indeed exercise restraint. A number of incidents are

being investigated, but overall the police showed restraint, ensuring that Parliament was able to conduct its business and that people could access this place for the right and proper democratic debate that we wanted to take place.” However, later in the debate she appeared to contradict her view that the police had exercised restraint when she said, “There have been a number of suggestions that further demonstrations will take place, and I expect the police to continue to deal with such demonstrations **robustly**.” (my emphasis).

And she told Labour’s Kerry McCarthy, “There is a formal process which is appropriate if individuals wish to make complaints about the way the police have treated them, and a number of complaints are currently being investigated. However, let me point out to the hon. Lady and to any other Members who may agree with her that we should not focus on how the police responded.” (my emphasis). But we all know that such investigations are carried out by the police themselves. Home Secretary May clearly believes the police always act impartially and with restraint. Some of us, however, are slightly more sceptical. For example, the London Review of Books for 6 January 2011 (Vol. 33. No. 1), devoted the whole of its letters page to irate readers, mostly Cambridge professors, who experienced at first hand the brutal behaviour of the police at the 9 December student protest.

## The Numbers Game

Parliament Notes in the last L&TUR (No. 213. Dec/Jan.) reported briefly on a long (5 hours) debate on immigration introduced by Labour’s Frank Field. Field and other MPs who spoke in the debate (11 Tory, 6 Labour, 1 Lib-Dem, with a large number of interventions), expressed concern about the increase in net migration (the difference between those leaving the UK and those entering) that has occurred in recent years. All, without exception, said that it was a priority issue for their constituents. And all, naturally, said it was about numbers and not race: that they and their constituents were not racist, but were simply worried about the effect of increasing numbers of immigrants on housing, jobs and services. But in spite of this special pleading, they

couldn’t escape from the fact that the numbers have been inflated by people from outside of the European Union, and these, overwhelmingly, have been non-white.

As a number of MPs pointed out nothing can be done about people coming to live and work in the UK from other EU member states. They are entitled to do so under Article 21 of the EU treaty. Just as, under the same Article, UK citizens have the right to live and work in other EU states; and do so in large numbers. Around 8 million British-born people live (and work) outside the UK; in the rest of Europe and beyond. The focus therefore has to be on those coming to the UK from elsewhere. And it’s difficult to avoid sounding racist when urging huge reductions in the numbers coming from non-white Africa, Asia and the Far East. And as the majority of non-EU migrants are students, a significant drop in numbers could be a real problem.

Frank Field spoke for many MPs when he said, “I do not think that there is any disagreement between Members, who, while seeing the advantages of immigration, consider that the argument is essentially about numbers, but who do not wish to control those numbers in a way that would harm any economic recovery.” That, it seems, is the nub of the problem. And the Coalition’s proposals for a cap on immigration, which will affect the skilled and highly skilled people the UK needs, will do just what Field and other MPs say they wish to avoid. Before addressing this issue however, let’s look at some of the comments about numbers made by MPs who would be grossly offended if they, or their constituents, were accused of being racist.

Tory Peter Lilley cleverly used research by David Coleman, an Oxford professor of demographics, to show the effect of immigration on the ethnic composition of the UK’s population. (An article by Coleman, ‘When Britain Becomes “Majority Minority”’, appeared in the December 2010 issue of Prospect). Lilley said that he (the professor), “observes that projections carried out by the Government Actuary’s Department suggest that if the levels of immigration we inherited from the last Government and factors such as the birth rates of those

who come from abroad, as against those of the domestic population, persist in future decades, in 50 years less than 50% of the population of this country will be ethnically British - ethnically English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish. That may not matter. If we reduce the level of net immigration into this country to 80,000 from the many tens of thousands, as we promised to do, it will take 70 years before less than half the population of this country are **the original, indigenous, ethnic British**. If we move towards a position of balanced migration, on which I have supported the right hon. Member for Birkenhead, it will take to the end of the century - 90 years - before the existing British ethnic population is a minority. If there is no immigration and no emigration - that is a rather unlikely eventuality - by the end of the century we will still be 75% ethnic British. All I ask of Members of this House is to consider whether this is a good thing or a bad thing.....I do not expect to receive a reply, because that is the sort of question that polite people do not ask. But it is what our constituents are asking and we should face up to it.” (my emphasis).

Lilley and his white, ethnic British constituents clearly believe it does matter. Otherwise he and they wouldn’t raise the question. Clearly, he and they would like to return to a golden age when there were no non-white people living in the UK. But he and they are ignorant of the fact that one would have to go back to pre-Roman times to discover such an age. Lilley’s use of the term “original, indigenous, ethnic British” reveals his true feelings. He is hiding behind the research of a professor of demographics to draw attention to what he sees as a problem. The research is neutral. Lilley’s use of it is not. He is clearly concerned about the racial make up of the UK. He, and no doubt his constituents, would prefer a permanent end to immigration, but they know that is impractical. So he advocates the option that will ensure that the UK stays predominately ethnically British for as long as possible. He may be expressing the wishes of his constituents, but it doesn’t make his position more acceptable.

While Peter Lilley used demographic research to warn of a threat to the ethnic make up of the UK, Tracey Crouch,

Tory member for Chatham and Aylesford, was at the blame game. If things go wrong, blame the immigrants. Like Peter Lilley, she said she was simply expressing the concerns of her constituents. She told MPs, "In one ward in my constituency, Chatham central, there is growing tension between the eastern European migrant population and their native counterparts. Divisions are not limited to culture; there are also geographical boundaries. Migrants occupy and dominate certain areas, making them no-go areas for neighbouring residents. Those areas are typified by multi-occupancy homes, anti-social behaviour and high levels of criminal activity, which makes life for those who have lived in the area for many years unbearable - I am afraid to say that it also makes them hostile to immigrants." What Crouch has described here is fairly typical of the experience of immigrants throughout the world. And it is not new to the UK. Immigrants naturally settle in areas where they feel comfortable. For example, Irish and Jewish immigrants to the UK between the wars made for areas where there were reasonably settled Irish and Jewish communities. And British-born emigrants to other countries do the same.

Numerous research has shown that there has been a net economic benefit to the UK from immigration. For example, a report published by University College, London, in July 2009 titled 'The Benefit of Migration: new evidence of the fiscal costs and benefits to the UK from Central and Eastern Europe.', showed that EU migrants made a substantial net contribution to the UK fiscal system, paying 37% more in taxes than they received in welfare payments. Yet in spite of this evidence, Tory MPs continue to question this. And one Tory, Christopher Pincher, seems to be in two minds about it. On the one hand he argued, "There is no doubt that we have benefited from immigration to this country, be it in science, the arts, comedy or cooking. I prefer eating to cooking, but there is no doubt that, culturally, we have had a massive stimulus as a result of immigration. Beyond that, many people have come to our country down the years and got jobs or started businesses. They have got involved in the community and paid their taxes; they have done all the things

that we should all try to do to be part of the big society."

However, he went on to say, "Over the past 15 or so years, however, the myth has developed that uncontrolled immigration has been an unalloyed economic benefit to this country. That myth needs to be exploded." This is a distortion of what has been said and written about immigration. No-one has argued that uncontrolled immigration is, has been, or would be, beneficial to the UK. And it is debatable whether immigration has been uncontrolled, which suggests that the UK has had an open door policy for the last 15 years. An accusation levelled at the last government by Frank Field. Immigration may have not been properly managed, but it has not been uncontrolled, and nor has an open door policy operated. It is pure tabloidese to suggest that that has been the case.

It is indisputable, however, that there is widespread concern about the impact of large-scale immigration - between 1997 and 2009 net migration was more than 2.2 million - on UK employment. Frank Field told MPs that, "The latest data show that we have had 126,000 new workers and the number of immigrant workers in this country now stands at 3.8 million, which is a record level. That has occurred while the number of British workers has fallen by 180,000. Clearly there is something wrong with our education system if we are producing a large number of people who do not aspire to the jobs that are so willingly taken by immigrants, who teach many of the host community what we used to mean by "the work ethic". But Field failed to say that a key reason why many British-born people do not aspire to these jobs is the disincentive of low pay. There is simply no economic incentive for them to work. But rather than press employers to increase wage rates, the Coalition is forcing people back to work by abolishing or reducing welfare payments. The Coalition believe that welfare payments are too high, not that wage rates are too low. Immigrants on the other hand will accept these jobs, at even lower than standard rates, an issue that the Coalition refuse to contest, because they are better off than they would be at home.

Although the focus has been largely on the impact on low-paid, unskilled work, the Coalition has introduced an interim cap on skilled and highly skilled workers coming to the UK. It is intended that the cap will become permanent in April this year. There will be an annual limit of 21,700 for non-European workers entering the UK through skilled and highly-skilled routes. But there is considerable vocal opposition to the cap which will affect Tier 1 workers (the highly skilled, such as doctors, engineers, scientists). The limit under this route will be 1,000. Whereas there will be a limit of 20,700 under the Tier 2 route (this will apply, for example, to skilled IT consultants). Employers have said that the cap will prevent them from recruiting skilled and highly skilled workers from abroad when there is a shortage at home. Labour's Mark Tami illustrated their concerns when he said, "The popular press would have us believe that workers who come to the UK are largely unskilled and easily replaceable with unemployed UK workers - presumably ending unemployment overnight. If only the situation were so straightforward, because the truth is very different. Tier 1 workers, in particular, are important, highly skilled individuals who are key to the well-being and growth of many businesses. Many employers tell me that, despite advertising nationally as well as locally, they are unable to recruit people with the required skills. Indeed, in some cases, despite advertising nationally, they have not received any applications at all."

Tami was right to highlight the drawback of the cap, but he got to the heart of the problem when he said, "As the hon. Gentleman said, that prompts the question: why do we in this country not have the skills we need? The simple answer is: we have failed to train the people to meet our needs. Like the previous Government and the Government before them, the present Government are talking about more apprentices and more training; no doubt future Governments will do the same. The issue is a major problem, and we have not addressed it so far. It is all very well talking about a cap or whatever, but unless we really address the skills base and training need in this country, we will never solve the problem." Replying for the Government,

James Brokenshire, Under Secretary of State for the Home Department, was adamant that, "Under this Government, Britain is, and will remain, open for business, and in today's globalised economy we will ensure that we continue to attract the brightest and the best so that UK companies remain competitive and economic growth is supported." Which rather beggars the question: why persist with a potentially damaging cap on skilled and highly skilled workers when business is largely opposed?

The temporary immigration cap was confirmed by Immigration Minister Damien Green on 20 December. He told MPs, "The House will be interested to know that tomorrow I will also be laying changes to the rules to close applications under the tier 1 general route from outside the United Kingdom immediately, as the original level specified on this tier has been reached. I can reassure the House that the policy of using these limits as part of our overall policy of reducing net migration is unchanged." And, shamefully, Frank Field agreed with him. Field said, "May I assure the Immigration Minister that, whatever the courts decide, there is huge support in the country, including in Labour constituencies, for the policy that the coalition Government are pursuing? Of course, if he were to bring those measures within the law that would be an advantage, but voters want to see the numbers coming down." Of course they do, but it can be done without pandering to those who claim not to be racist, but whose invective is aimed primarily at non-white people.

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beaten into amending the law in question "...other EU countries would need to do the same." The ownership of the media in Italy comes to mind. As does the fact that Rupert Murdoch may shortly own an even bigger chunk of the British media.

Orbán, and Fidesz are running Hungary like a proper national government. Possibly a little too 'national' - they are giving Hungarian-speaking minorities in Serbia, Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine a vote in parliamentary and presidential elections. (The Slovaks are thinking of

rescinding ethnic Hungarians right to vote in national elections). This is reported as a means of shoring up the Fidesz vote. It could backfire badly and possibly even cause wars. There is no particular reason why the Hungarians should not assert themselves. It gave the Soviet Union a seriously bad time in November 1956. It simultaneously discovered that 'the West' talked the anti-Soviet talk, but was incapable of an anti-Soviet walk. There was lots of 'sympathy' (and *Psalmus Hungaricus* was played plenty of times on BBC radio), but not a bullet, or a loaf of bread was passed on to the insurgents in Budapest.

France and Germany are currently doing the 'Anglo-Saxons' work for them, in browbeating a (relatively) small member-state of the EU. Orbán (a Calvinist in heavily Catholic country) and his party have been accused of attempting a third Hungarian revolution, in the line of 1956, and 1989 (Orbán was a student leader that year, and demanded the Red Army leave Hungary, at a great rally in Budapest). He is not the first east European leader to learn that the EU may not be an improvement on the USSR. In 2008, the President of the Czech Republic was browbeaten by a deputation from the European Parliament, (it included a *Finnáil* MEP), into signing the Lisbon Treaty into law. Readers may recall that Ireland's electorate was sent back to the polling booths because it had rejected Lisbon

Viktor Orbán, after a visit from the Portuguese lapsed-Maoist (and full-fledged 'Anglo-Saxon' NeoCon) José Manuel Barroso, head of the EU Commission, has pulled in his horns on the matter of the media law. He hasn't said that it will not be enacted, but that it won't be enacted quite yet. And he will stop telling Merkel and Sarkozy (meaning Germany and France) where to get off (in public, anyway).

## Bitter Orange

### and Ukrainian self-importance

'Moscow's embrace will crush our nation, says Tymoshenko' (Times, 19.05.10). Ms Tymoshenko, an 'Oligarch', (a person who did well out of the privatisations in the ex-USSR) was the 'soul' of Ukraine's 2005 Orange Revolution. The Orange Revolution

was a bum deal for Ukraine's people. She lost 2010's Presidential contest. Tymoshenko (and the Times) accuse President Yanukovich of "conspiring" to hand industries to Russia. Tymoshenko claims a petition asking that Crimea become part of the Russian Federation is a plot. (Moscow gave it to Ukraine in 1956).

Yanukovich signed an agreement allowing Russia's fleet to remain in Sevastopol (Crimea), for thirty years. Tymoshenko whinges but offers no alternative. Apart from national loyalties there are many jobs and incomes involved in the naval base. Presumably, in 2005, she hoped a US fleet would replace Russia's. She suggests Crimea has tourist potential. That is not incompatible with a naval base. It's a quite large area.

Tymoshenko demands that the States guaranteeing Ukraine's "territorial integrity" (on giving up its nuclear weapons) do so. The US is not interested, while Russia has 'interests' in Ukraine. During Tymoshenko's "19 years of independence", some Ukrainian politicians annoyed Russia, ranging from stealing oil and gas (and complaining when the Soviet-era discount was withdrawn) to preparing to join NATO.

Tymoshenko leads a People's Committee to Defend Ukraine, which will "confront and oppose" the current tendency. Bronwen Maddox, (The Times's international editor), emphasises Russia's evil intentions. (Two decades ago Russia's future was that of a banana republic supplying oil and gas to the West at bargain prices. Putin has asserted Russia's interests, realising that becoming capitalist did not endear it to the West).

Russia has legitimate interests in Ukraine (including the large Russian-speaking minority). The agreements made with Ukraine are not exploitative. They will be mutually beneficial, and consolidate links between Ukraine and Russia. There is barely a hillock between them.

Many Ukrainian politicians' attitude to Russia has been arrogant. This may have to do with Soviet politics. In *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union* (1990), Peter Duncan writes (p. 98) that Ukraine's [Communist] Party was important "since there is no Party organisation for the RSFSR as a whole". The RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) was largely the same territory as the current Russian Federation.

That may be the origin of Ukrainian politicians' absurd sense of their own importance. Ukraine's Party was the biggest in the Union. Its greasy pole could lead to ruling the USSR, a superpower, in a bipolar world.