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EDITOR: ANDREW HUNT

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Biographical Notes on the contributors

Editorial

The Appeal of Nazism

Dr Conan Fischer

The Russian Revolution of 1905

John Morison

New Interpretations of Lenin for a Post-Communist Age

Beryl Williams

Victorian Parliamentary Reform in Perspective

Dr Roland Quinault

Was the League of Nations really a failure?: the 'new diplomacy'
in a period of appeasement

Professor Peter J Beck

Tales of National Insecurity: American Historians and the Cold War

Dr Scott Lucas

Reviews

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

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Dr Scott Lucas is Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Birmingham. He is the author of *Divided We Stand: Britain, the U.S. and the Suez Crisis*, published in 1991 and being re-issued next year, and of numerous articles on American and British foreign policy. He has just completed a documentary textbook, *The Lion's Last War: Britain and the Suez Crisis*, and is now writing *Campaigns of Truth: American Propaganda and the Cold War, 1945-1956*.

Editorial

ANDREW HUNT

The year 1995 will go down as a memorable one in Scottish History teaching: it is the first year when ALL pupils starting a course of Higher History must study for and sit the **Revised Higher** exam. I suppose we might soon drop the word 'Revised' since there is in fact nothing different on offer from which it needs to be distinguished. Words like "Traditional" and "Alternative" will go back to having their ordinary boring meanings instead of being able, for the Scottish History teacher, to conjure up whole structures of teaching. Revised Higher History is one of the success stories that has emanated from Dalkeith in the past 10 years. Part of its success lay in what can now be clearly seen as its relatively limited aim: to take ideas and best practice from the range of previous options and use common sense to turn them into something which, while giving the subject some new focuses to help point it in new directions, nevertheless left the subject as something which was the heir of a recognisable legacy of existing resources and experience.

Teachers starting Revised Higher therefore set off from a relatively sure footing. Questions of pace, depth and the Extended Essay still needed to be dealt with thoughtfully, but the first few years worth of examination papers were quite reassuring and a range of (mostly) attractive new publications aimed right at the subject gave widespread confidence about the teaching content.

This continuity and sense of certainty does, however, help to cause a nagging concern. The active use of sources in Paper II is a new development, but there's a risk all the same that people teaching the Appeasement and Road to War topic (for instance) might come close to just teaching the old League of Nations topic again; and, even worse, in ten years time will be teaching exactly the same as they are now. This is probably one of the big problems we face as teachers for whatever Higher topic areas we teach; bringing a sense of freshness to our year by year teaching. What I would like to feel is that, every now and again, there was thrust into my hand some briefish, attractive and readable literature which would be just enough to let me believe I can still be a radical or a revisionist, that being a History teacher means being different.

Academic historians never seem to be tied to prescriptive syllabuses in the way that we are and are much more prepared to offer new views and angles on their teaching areas. When I approached the six contributors to this issue of the Year Book, their universal reply was something along the lines of "Do you mind if I try to bring together a few new ideas from something I'm working on ...?". What more can I say? I get exactly what I want without even asking: topicality, originality and freshness all in one go.

The unifying theme of the 1995 Year Book is Revised Higher. As usual, the contributors, who come from all different parts of the country, have not let me down. Their articles range from the broad and sweeping to the quite particular, yet with all of them there is something they've said or some line they've taken, where I am saying "That's new, I never thought of it that way, I can use that". I can live on as a rebel for one more year yet!

The Appeal of Nazism

DR CONAN FISCHER

As Germany faced defeat in the autumn of 1918 the monarchy first buckled, then collapsed. Amid massive popular demonstrations against the old régime, a Social Democratic politician, Friedrich Ebert, was handed the reins of government by the last Imperial Chancellor, Prince Max von Baden. Ebert resolved to frame a new constitution with all possible speed and the elections to a Constituent Assembly which followed in January 1919 seemed to confirm the breadth of popular support for a democratic political order; the parties committed to a parliamentary republic won over three-quarters of the votes cast. The Assembly convened in the Thuringian town of Weimar, which had associations both with the German Enlightenment and with the liberalism of 1848 — values to which Ebert alluded with optimism and pride.

The contrast could not have been greater when the NSDAP's Chief of National Organisation, Gregor Strasser, addressed parliament in May 1932. Germany was being governed by decree under the emergency powers contained in Article 48 of the constitution, the economy was in tatters and political violence raged through the streets and countryside of Germany. The democratic parties which had dominated the Constituent Assembly just thirteen years earlier were in decline or had collapsed and the National Socialists, who had not even existed at that time, now looked set to enter government. 'The German people', declared Strasser, 'have earned Adolf Hitler and his movement. We have gained for ourselves the task of governing by building up this movement out of nothing, against you all.' 'The Nazis, of course, had no intention of rescuing the Weimar constitution. Adolf Hitler promised to build a Third Reich where he, as Leader (*Führer*), would wield ultimate power. The German people were invited to trade their freedom for material security and collective solidarity within the NSDAP's racist commonwealth.

Even before Hitler had been appointed as the last Chancellor — and gravedigger — of the Weimar Republic in January 1933, the academic world was trying to explain how, indeed, the Nazi movement could have grown from literally nothing to become the decisive force in German political life. Many commentators were struck by the decline and even collapse of conservative and liberal parties shortly before and during the Nazi breakthrough and concluded that the bedrock of their support, the Protestant middle classes, had turned to the NSDAP. The political scientist Theodor Geiger remarked that 'National Socialism owes its electoral success to the traditional and new middle class'² and Hendrik de Man defined Nazism as 'a typical middle-class and white-collar movement'.³ Post-war analysts agreed. Seymour Martin Lipset coined the famous definition of fascism as an extremism of the centre⁴ while Karl Dietrich Bracher concluded that: 'It was the rural and urban "middle class", in the broad sense of the term, which started and carried through the breakthrough of the NSDAP. ... Generally, in times of crisis the hopeless (sic) elements in the middle class tend to listen to fascist slogans, while the working class, on the other hand, tend towards Communism.'⁵

There is powerful circumstantial evidence to support this view of Nazism. The pre-industrial elements of the middle classes — such as peasant farmers and artisans — found the going tough in the Weimar Republic as economic modernisation threatened to marginalise them and as government policy favoured the urban consumer rather than the traditional (and expensive!) producers. The new middle class which included white-collar employees, sales staff, civil servants, technicians and the professions had better prospects economically, but many were politically hostile to the new Republic. And they, too, suffered periodically during Weimar's recurrent economic crises. Yet despite this ocean of discontent the centre and right of German politics failed to produce a mass party capable of acting as a counterweight to the labour movement's republican Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). Instead, the middle classes voted for relatively small parties which, they believed, could represent their very particular needs: as Protestant farmers, as small businessmen, as Bavarian Catholics or whatever. The small middle-class parties were aware that particular groups had granted them support 'in an almost contractual fashion'⁶ and were therefore very reluctant to make 'big' decisions, or reach compromises, in the wider political interest. Yet they were equally incapable of protecting their constituents in a complex and crisis-ridden world where 'big' decisions had to be taken anyway, leading to growing frustration and anger among their supporters.

The case of agriculture in the Protestant north of Germany provides an excellent example of this process. After the Great War, North German farmers usually voted for the German National People's Party (DNVP) which, they expected, would protect their interests. However, the party was too small and the wider demands of economy and society too complex to allow the protection of farming in isolation. By 1927 world agricultural prices were falling, and, as Jeremy Noakes remarks, the farmers began abandoning the DNVP in despair. They turned towards small, radical, agrarian parties who could win a few seats in parliament thanks to proportional representation, or joined extra-parliamentary leagues such as the Landvolk.⁷ In the 1928 Reichstag elections support for the established centrist and right-wing parties fell as many middle-class voters abstained, or turned to a gaggle of special-interest parties which picked up 14 per cent of the vote.

They were noisy, but ineffective, as the Great Depression overwhelmed the German economy and ruined the livelihoods of millions of citizens. Eventually, in the July 1932 elections, their supporters deserted them *en masse* as the NSDAP's electoral tally surged to 13.8 million votes (37.4 per cent). At the same time, the conventional liberal and conservative parties, which had already suffered heavily in the September 1930 elections, either lost further ground or simply disintegrated. During all this upheaval the combined Social Democratic and Communist vote remained pretty well stable, which left it only reasonable to conclude that the liberal, conservative and special-interest parties — all strongly middle-class — had provided the NSDAP with the bulk of its supporters. The Nazis, it seemed, had finally created a mass middle-class movement powerful enough to eclipse the feared Social Democrats and destroy their despised Republic. Writing of Nazi ideology and propaganda, Ian Kershaw has argued that it was 'ideally placed to integrate the heterogeneous middle class on an ideological plane into a movement which could promise to defend sectional interest while claiming to stand above it.'⁸

This final phrase, 'claiming to stand above it', is very important, for the Nazis never claimed to be a class party and never promised to defend sectional interests in isolation. In March 1930 Hitler signed a party statement on agricultural policy which remarked that: 'It is madness to believe that a single occupational group can exclude itself from the German community which shares in the same fate: it is a crime to set farmers and city dwellers against one another, for they are bound together for better or for worse'.⁹ Similarly, Walter Darré, leader of the NSDAP's Agricultural Affairs Bureau, wrote in April 1931 that it was pointless to try to save agriculture in isolation: 'To form a "GREEN FRONT" today is as reasonable as trying to set up trade unions on a sinking ship in order, while the ship sinks, to secure the best possible economic rights for each occupational group among the crew.'¹⁰ Hitler renounced any talk of class politics. Speaking at an election meeting in Kiel on 31 August 1930 he declared:

The NSDAP is an organisation which does not recognise proletarians, does not recognise bourgeois, farmers, manual workers and so on; instead it is an organisation based in all regions of Germany, composed of all social groups. If you ask one of us; 'Young man, what are you? Bourgeois? Proletarian?', he will smile; 'I am a German! I fight in my brown shirt.' That is indicative of our significance; we do not aspire to be anything else, we are all fighting for the future of a people. We are all equal in our ranks.¹¹

What, though, of the older consensus that National Socialism, for all its rhetoric, appealed essentially to the middle classes? Here an entirely different line of research, focusing on the structure of the National Socialist constituency, has forced a revision in traditional thinking. Turning first to the electorate, Jürgen Falter's meticulous investigation of voting patterns in the Weimar Republic indicates that far too many Nazi voters were working-class (some 40 per cent) to permit the characterisation of the NSDAP as a middle-class party. It appealed disproportionately to Protestants, did somewhat better in towns and rural areas than in great cities, and attracted the employed more readily than the unemployed; however, one cannot simply assert that the higher the proportion of workers in an electoral ward the lower the Nazi vote.¹² Therefore, as the National Socialists themselves claimed, their members of parliament owed their seats to electors from all walks of society. As well as discrediting the old class-based model of Nazism, Falter dispels the myth that women were particularly inclined to vote Nazi and the myth that it was primarily the young voters who supported Hitler - in terms of gender and of age the NSDAP's electorate was broadly representative of the wider population.¹³

Detlef Mühlberger's authoritative work on the Nazi Party's paid-up membership further emphasises the extraordinarily broad social appeal exerted by National Socialism. The NSDAP certainly had

many middle-class members, but over 40 per cent were working-class; primarily skilled and primarily from the secondary sector of the economy (industry, manufacturing, crafts).¹⁴ Gender and not class produced the greatest distortions in the pattern of the NSDAP's social appeal. Fewer than one in ten party members were female during the early 1930s, reflecting in part the low priority accorded to the recruitment of women by the Nazi leadership.

The other key Nazi organisation at the end of Weimar was the SA (storm-troopers) which boasted some 450,000 adherents as against the half-million or more party members. Since many of these storm-trooper did not possess a party card, the nature of the SA's social appeal is very important to our understanding of Nazism. Conan Fischer and Detlef Mühlberger have shown that the SA recruited the bedrock of its membership from the unemployed male working classes¹⁵ which probably offset the slight bias towards a middle-class membership in the NSDAP itself. Recently, historians have also drawn attention to the significance of the Nazi labour union, the NSBO,¹⁶ all of which leaves traditional attempts to define Nazism as a middle-class mass movement looking very dubious indeed.

By July 1932, Jürgen Falter calculates, more workers were voting for the NSDAP than for either the SPD or the Communist Party (KPD)¹⁷ while it has been estimated that at least half-a-million workers had joined Nazi organisations by then.¹⁸ All of this demands a fresh look at middle-class motives for supporting the National Socialists and, equally, an investigation of working-class Nazism. The classic regional and local studies of the NSDAP in Lower Saxony by Jeremy Noakes and William Sheridan Allen respectively, provide revealing insights into the mentality of middle-class Nazi supporters in this Protestant area of north-western Germany. They consistently used the language of cohesion and national solidarity when explaining their political preferences. Allen cites a pastor who likened the NSDAP to the former Imperial army because 'both represented the whole of the German people and not any specific group',¹⁹ a Hitler Youth veteran who extolled the organisation because there were 'no social or class distinctions'²⁰ and even a prosperous businessman who 'believed the common people should have a better life and that socialism was essential'.²¹ Noakes emphasises the 'classlessness' of the NSDAP's organisation,²² but he, like Allen, was writing at a time when it was almost universally believed that National Socialism appealed predominantly to the middle classes. These solidarist sentiments therefore appeared to represent middle-class interests dressed up in fresh (and pious) rhetoric. More recently, Thomas Childers has written of the NSDAP's ability to speak 'the language of both transcendent class or even national solidarity and sectarian special interest',²³ and it does appear that many middle-class Nazis were seeking an escape from class politics altogether rather than regrouping around the National Socialist banner to pursue class interests afresh. They were weary of the old sectarianism and feared its consequences if it continued unchecked, quite possibly culminating in a Social Democratic or, still worse, a Communist victory.

Working-class Nazis, like their middle-class counterparts, harboured specific grievances against the Weimar Republic and its politics. The staggeringly high levels of unemployment during the depression years, peaking at some 35 per cent of the registered workforce (but in reality probably nearer 50 per cent), drove hundreds of thousands of young males into the SA in particular. Employees in the heavy industrial sector of the economy sometimes blamed disarmament and thus the Versailles Treaty for the thin order books which in turn depressed their wages and wider prospects. For some the revisionist nationalism of the NSDAP was, therefore, an attractive and even logical political option. There was growing disillusionment and frustration more generally with the SPD and the official trade unions for their willingness during the Depression to tolerate the severe deflationary policies pursued by the Chancellor (Prime Minister) Brüning and to accept wage cuts in private industry. The Social Democrats argued firstly that Brüning was a 'lesser evil' than Hitler or the rabidly reactionary leader of the DNVP, Hugenberg, and secondly that deflation and retrenchment was the best means of combating the economic crisis anyway. This, however, contrasted starkly with the NSDAP which, shortly before the July 1932 election, announced an ambitious programme of job creation through deficit-funded infrastructural projects. Despite considerable residual loyalty to the SPD, many of its supporters therefore switched to the Nazis, at least in the polling booths, in the hope of an economic recovery.

The SPD's share of the vote fell from 30 per cent in 1928 to just 18.3 per cent in March 1933 with its absolute tally of votes dropping from 9.15 million to 7.18 million over the same period. Traditionally it was argued that these lost votes went to the KPD whose share of the poll rose from 10.6 per cent in 1928 to peak at 16.9 per cent in November 1932 before declining to 12.3 per cent in March 1933. It now appears that this was a false assumption with the weight of evidence indicating that the new Communist voters were not generally former Social Democrats. Jürgen Falter has demonstrated that

approximately 3 million Social Democratic voters switched to the NSDAP in the elections after 1928 (with a million Nazis switching to the SPD),²⁴ while this author has located the bulk of Communist electoral gains during 1930 and 1932 in rural and small-town environments; gains which bore little statistical relationship to the detailed pattern of SPD losses.²⁵

It is believed that only half of the working-class electorate had supported the Marxist SPD and KPD during Weimar, and Nazi working-class voters from a left-wing background were joined by substantial numbers from the centre and right as well as first-time voters and previous abstainers. In exerting so eclectic an appeal the NSDAP could claim with some justice that its vision of the national ethnic community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) was becoming concrete reality. For the former right-wingers and centrists this would not have been an entirely novel concept, for their old parties had subscribed to patriotic values in their rhetoric and had denounced Marxist class politics. For the former Socialists the change in political preference was more dramatic, but recent studies have suggested that working-class Social Democrats were potentially vulnerable to the appeal of Nazism in a number of respects.

W. L. Guttsman has shown that the advent of the Weimar Republic altered working-class attitudes to state and nation.²⁶ In the old Empire socialist workers had been pilloried as 'enemies of the nation' and as 'scoundrels without a fatherland', but Weimar Germany was perceived by the socialists as 'their' Republic more than anyone else's. Its enhanced welfare policies, the recognition of trade unions as wage bargainers (backed if necessary by state arbitration), the growing self-confidence of workers' cultural organisations and, of course, the participation of Social Democrats in government contributed in effect to the emancipation of the working classes within the framework of the nation.²⁷ The Nazis' vision of national solidarity parted company from the Social Democratic in its rejection of liberal values and in its racialism, but the point had nonetheless been reached in Weimar where the concept of nationhood no longer had the preponderantly negative connotations for socialists which it had possessed during the days of the Empire. Similarly, Social Democratic trade unionists began to consider the possibility of obtaining the best possible deal within the capitalist economic order, for example through productivity gains (*Leistung*) rather than necessarily by seizing a larger share of the existing cake. Again, these notions with their North American Taylorist or Fordist overtones were also to influence strongly Nazi labour policy.²⁸ This is not for one moment to equate Social Democratic and National Socialist ideology, but rather to identify specific points of contact between the two which might attract activists as well as voters to Nazism.

Points of contact of a very different kind existed between Nazi and Communist ideology. The Nazis certainly spoke of integration and social solidarity, but in their fundamental opposition to the Weimar constitution and to its foreign policy commitments, especially the Versailles Treaty and reparations, the NSDAP spoke a language the Communists could understand. The KPD had opposed the republican constitutional order from the start and became increasingly hostile towards the SPD with the passage of time. In the realm of foreign policy, as a staunch supporter of the Soviet Union from the mid-1920s, the Communists opposed any conciliatory moves by Germany towards the Western Allies out of fear that these might lead subsequently to a deterioration in German-Soviet relations and even to German participation in a capitalist, anti-Soviet war. Reparations were viewed as a double exploitation of the German working classes — first by German capitalists and then by the foreigners who exacted the reparations. That the Nazis' denunciation of the same stemmed from a racist conception of the world was not lost on the KPD, but on the basis of 'my enemy's enemy being my friend' an uneasy and intermittent rapprochement was forged between the radical extremes both at the grass roots and in parliamentary divisions and even some plebiscites.²⁹

Middle-class and working-class Germans had turned to the Nazis for a variety of reasons. Some had experienced great hardship, others harboured political grudges or fears, but most sought deliverance from the factionalism of Weimar's public life. The concept of *Volksgemeinschaft*, which had possessed overtones of social and national solidarity before the Nazis lent it a biological racist dimension, served as a powerful mobilising 'myth'³⁰ for these disenchanted Germans. They took Nazi ideology to be in part political allegory (which it was) and in part a concrete programme for the future (as the National Socialists intended it to be). Any vision of absolute social harmony might be judged utopian and to imbue it with racist characteristics is to make it morally indefensible in liberal eyes. The NSDAP was, of course, not liberal and therefore untroubled by the potential destruction of individual lives implicit in its biological racialism. As for the utopianism, the Nazis exploited an idealised memory of the Great War to provide an indication of what the *Volksgemeinschaft* would mean in practice. The war, they argued, had seen male Germans of every class and confession, from every region, sacrificing

their individual and sectional interests for the good of the nation — a model of selflessness which was contrasted with the alleged fractiousness, cowardice and greed of Weimar civilian society.³¹ This had practical as well as ideological advantages. A climate had been created where the National Socialists' militarism and hierarchical chains of command, of giving and obeying orders, could cut through civilian class antagonisms and lay claim simultaneously to being the embodiment of Germany's heroic past and of a heroic future.

To conclude, it has often been remarked that Hitler's movement failed to gain majority electoral support at the end of Weimar and that a much smaller minority of Germans actually joined Nazi organisations before 1933. Whether this is an entirely realistic conclusion will be addressed in due course, but in the past, attempts were made to define this minority in terms of conventional class politics — as (Protestant) middle-class. This view no longer seems tenable, for recent work has demonstrated that the National Socialists attracted support from almost all sections of society — as their ideology demanded of them. The failures and disappointments of Weimar which stretched from the hated Treaty of Versailles to the devastating slump of 1929-32 (passing through violent political disorder, hyperinflation and reparations crises on the way) left most of German society potentially vulnerable to Nazism. It addressed society's resentments and fears and simultaneously offered a model of future social harmony which many Germans found attractive. The German left bent to the fierce ideological winds which raged through political life by embracing paramilitarism, flirting with nationalism and, in the Social Democrats' case, contemplating the politics of social solidarity rather than class conflict. On the right things went much further, to the point where, in January 1933, Germany's remaining conservatives and liberals may not have been Nazi but were nonetheless prepared to hand Hitler the keys to the front door. Political Catholicism, in return for (worthless) guarantees of its constituents' religious freedoms, was prepared to acquiesce in the destruction of Weimar. This puts in question the contention that Nazism was a minority movement. At the end of the day, Nazism was not so much isolated from the rest of the political world, but instead was the lowering tip of a hideously dangerous iceberg upon which inter-war European civilisation and the lives of many millions were to be destroyed.

NOTES

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- 16) Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State. The foundation and development of the internal structure of the Third Reich* (London & New York, 1981) pp40-2; Volker Kratzberg, *Arbeiter auf den Weg zu Hitler? [...]* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1989); Gunther Mai, 'Die Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellen-Organisation. Zum Verhältnis von Arbeiterschaft und Nationalsozialismus', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 31 (1983) pp 573-613.
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- 27) Ibid.
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- 29) Conan Fischer, *The German Communists and the Rise of Nazism* (Basingstoke & London, 1993) chs 6-9.
- 30) In the sense expounded by the French political philosopher, Georges Sorel.
- 31) As cited in Fischer, *Nazis*, pp142-4.

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Rise of the Nazis

Conan Fischer

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Conan Fischer is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Strathclyde.

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The Russian Revolution of 1905

JOHN MORISON

Introduction

It was clear that Russia was facing a widespread social crisis with political overtones at the beginning of the twentieth century. Since the great textile workers' strike of June 1896 in St. Petersburg, labour unrest had become an increasingly organised and mounting threat. Peasant discontent had been a constant feature over the years, but the violent looting and burning of gentry estates in three provinces in 1902-3 showed that it was reaching a new level of intensity. Ethnic and national tensions in the multi-national Empire were mounting, as the campaign of passive resistance mounted by the Finns since 1899 and the violent pogrom against the Jews in Kishinev in April 1903 indicated.¹ The general university strike of February 1899 indicated the extent to which universities, traditionally the 'barometers of society', were becoming focal- and flash- points for political opposition to the regime.² Professional associations were enabling school teachers, doctors and the like to voice critical and oppositional demands and opinions.³ The widespread tension in society was reflected in the plethora of underground political groups and parties which were being formed. The foundation of the Union of Liberation in September 1903 marked a significant stage in the development of a radical constitutional movement which was willing to cooperate with revolutionary parties. These rising tensions in society at large were exacerbated by an industrial recession from 1900 and by the outbreak of the war against Japan in 1904, which was to prove so humiliating for the government, and which was to provoke the explosion of strikes, demonstrations, mutinies, violence and political activity which went to make up what has come to be known as the 1905 Revolution, even though it lasted into 1906 and failed to topple the régime.

Economic Modernisation

The Revolution was intimately connected with Russia's process of modernisation. Since the beginning of the eighteenth century or even earlier, Russia has seemed to be engaged in a desperate process of catching up, looking westwards for models and inspiration but also finding consolation and pride in Russia's separateness, often defined in terms of her spirituality and Orthodox faith. The most clearly visible aspect of modernisation was industrialisation and consequent urbanisation. The Crimean defeat had brought home forcibly to Russians the gap which had opened up between them and their industrially more developed Western rivals. Alexander II's government developed the financial and commercial infra-structure, and encouraged railway building and private entrepreneurship. As the century went on, the Russian state became more interventionist, building and running railways, protecting and subsidising industrialists, and soliciting the investment of foreign capital and the importation of advanced technology and skills. The upward curve of growth was more even than has often been supposed, but Count Witte, the Finance Minister from 1892 to 1903, was a disciple of Friedrich List and believed as an item of faith that Russia's continued Great Power status depended upon the building of an industrial base comparable to that of her competitors and so gave an added impetus to the process.⁴ Existing towns linked to the railways grew fast, and new factory towns sprang up around steel mills and coal mines in the Ukrainian steppes and elsewhere. Between 1811 and 1910 the total population of cities in the Russian Empire grew from 2,780,337 to 23,553,583. Between 1856 and 1910 Moscow's population rose from 368,765 to 1,481,240 and that of St. Petersburg from 490,808 to 1,566,000.⁵ The mass inflow of peasants in search of temporary and permanent work led to the formation of an unstable urban population, largely composed of only partially urbanised peasants who retained family and financial links with their home villages. Social conditions for the new urban workers were appalling. They were accommodated in doss-houses, factory barracks or grossly overcrowded private flats where it was commonplace for eight to share a single room. In the Donbass, miners commonly lived in primitive dugouts.⁶ Services were minimal and sanitation primitive. In St. Petersburg, sewage was discharged into canals which overflowed in times of flooding into inhabited cellars. Disease, including cholera and typhus, was rampant. Mortality rates were high. Many young males came to the towns without their wives or families. Prostitution flourished, with young peasant girls who had been dismissed from domestic employment as an abundant source of recruits. State

registered prostitutes with their “yellow cards” and health checks were outnumbered by unofficial operators. There were high rates of syphilis, a disease which spread to out-lying villages as infected children of prostitutes were farmed out to wet-nurses resident in them.⁷ Drunkenness was another major social problem. Peasants were lured to the cities by rumours of high wages, but expenses were also high and expectations tended to be unfulfilled. Wages never seemed high enough, and sometimes were paid in part in over-priced goods from the factory shops. The routine of life of the factory, with very long hours and tedious repetition, was very different from that of the village. Discipline was harsh, with powers of hiring and firing, and the imposition of fines in the hands of the foremen. This arbitrary justice often offended the peasants’ notions of fairness. It was out of these frustrated aspirations, grievances and problems of adjustment to a new style of life that a labour movement developed. This had a violent and destructive side which reflected the culture of violence in the Russian village, where horse thieves tended to be summarily lynched. This movement usually provided its own leaders, with skilled workers’ groups and *zemliachestva*, or organisations of workers from the same district, to the fore. The process was ironically fostered by the Tsar’s security police. The head of its Moscow branch, Sergei Zubatov, had the clever notion of forming police-sponsored but illegal trades unions to engage workers in economic battle against their employers, with local city governors forcing concessions out of the latter. It was hoped that the workers would thereby be convinced of the benevolence of the Tsar and so be diverted from making radical political demands. Zubatov’s plan was abandoned after it had been blamed for a general strike in Odessa in 1903, but Father Gapon, who was to lead his workers’ organisation on the ill-fated Bloody Sunday March in St. Petersburg in January 1905, had also received police help and encouragement. The ever-growing and dangerous labour movement which was to provide much of the impetus for the strikes and workers’ demonstrations that were to be such an important part of the 1905 Revolution was thus a direct consequence of the process of economic modernisation and urbanisation. It is less easy to argue that the peasants’ movement also emanated from this process, although some have tried to do so. A traditional view has been that Witte’s programme of forced industrialisation was financed on the backs of the peasantry, who were squeezed to the limits by new and heavy indirect taxes on vodka and other essential items of consumption, and fell into huge arrears on the redemption dues for the lands which they had been granted after the emancipation of 1861. As the population rose dramatically, so the peasantry sank into undernourished and desperate destitution. The rural disorders were thus, in this interpretation, acts of blind and violent rage, the product of a crisis in peasant agriculture. Recent research has tended to undermine this view. The peasant population did rise markedly in the second half of the nineteenth century, but largely as a result of declining mortality rates. These can in large part be attributed to improved standards of nutrition, with more food grains per head being retained in the villages, notwithstanding the population growth, as production and yields increased. If the Great Russian infant mortality rate remained high, this was the result of early transfer from breast-feeding to solid foods, which caused many fatal diarrhoeal upsets. Peasants defaulted on only about five percent of their redemption dues, which anyway were generally less than the dues which they had been paying to the landowners before emancipation. The burden of indirect taxation fell far more heavily on the urban than the rural population.⁸

But if there was no crisis in peasant agriculture, how can the peasant movement of 1905-06 be explained? The fundamental issue was land. The peasants were insistent that land was God’s gift to man, on a par with air and water. As such, it should be distributed on an egalitarian basis among those who tilled it. This aspiration could only be satisfied by a fundamental land redistribution in their favour. When they burned the manor houses of the gentry in 1905-06, their intention was to scare them so much that they would abandon their lands and never return. The peasants also suffered indirectly from the consequences of a crisis in gentry agriculture. Competition from the American prairies, and the fall in the world price of grain, hit many Russian estate-holders hard. Many gentry were forced to sell their estates. Both new and old landowners felt the need to exploit their holdings more intensively. Rents taken from peasant leasers were raised, and wages to day labourers were held as low as possible. Customary rights of pasturing and timber gathering were curtailed and fines exacted if peasant stock or even chickens intruded on landowners’ lands. Many of the rural disturbances in 1905-06 can be connected directly to the breach of such customary rights.

Social Modernisation

To enter the modern world, Russia had to educate her people: to overcome mass illiteracy, to create a skilled work force, a commercial class and professionals and experts of all sorts. She also needed to break down the old rigid divisions between social 'estates' or *sosloviia*, and to create a society in which upward social mobility was facilitated. The post-Crimean war reforms of Alexander II initiated this process, albeit in a limited and often contradictory manner. Literacy rates improved. Secondary and higher education facilities were expanded, even if there were still only about 20,000 university students in 1905. The expanded educational system demanded more teachers at all levels. The new courts established by the judicial reforms of the 1860's necessitated the training of many more lawyers. The new local government organs, the *zemstva*, set up in 1864, employed not only elementary school teachers but also doctors, sanitary engineers and other specialists. Expanding industry and commerce needed and trained skilled workers, book-keepers, clerks and managers at all levels. On the eve of 1905, congresses of schoolteachers, doctors and others had begun to challenge the existing order, for instance demanding a free school in a free society, and arguing that satisfaction of their professional demands and aspirations could only be achieved through political reform. This educated elite became increasingly separate from and critical of the régime. Uniting with enlightened members of the gentry, it hoped to transform Russia into a thoroughly westernised, democratic and constitutional country. The increasingly uncompromising hostility of the government towards even the more moderate of their demands drove the members of this movement to adopt even more radical postures. By the eve of the Revolution, it had developed organisational structures, had joined with some of the revolutionary parties in the Union of Liberation to demand a legislative rather than a purely consultative assembly, elected on the widest possible franchise, and had begun to publish abroad an illegal newspaper, *Emancipation*. The assassination in July 1904 of the hard-line Minister of the Interior, Pleve, precipitated ill-judged concessions which allowed *zemstva* to turn reform banquets into political demonstrations in late 1904 and to raise the tension almost to breaking-point.

Educated society played a crucial role in 1905 in articulating the political demands of society and in providing leadership. A multitude of professional unions were formed, found coordination in the Union of Unions and in the excitement of the moment, voiced demands which would have led to a constitutional rather than autocratic government. Even the cautious Union of Professors wanted a consultative assembly, whilst nearly all the others wanted rule by a democratically elected assembly. The students were most radical of all, embracing Bolshevism, and throwing open the doors of the universities to mass meetings of workers and to armed revolutionaries, after the ill-judged concession by the government of the Temporary Rules of 27 August 1905, which turned the universities into islands of autonomy, protected against police interference. In the countryside, the rural intelligentsia of village schoolteachers, scribes and even doctors often played a crucial role as intermediaries between the outside world and the villages, explaining and sometimes leading.

The revolutionary year was a dramatic demonstration that Russian society as a whole was entering the modern world of democracy. All levels of society were demanding basic civil rights, from the flood of peasant petitions to the radical political demands of the new and emerging liberal and revolutionary political parties. All of society seemed to be engaged in a frenzied political debate. Particularly after the October Manifesto, the liberated press discussed all manner of topics. The sale of newspapers expanded enormously, in the countryside as well as in the towns. Leaflets of all hues showered upon the population. Political meetings, processions, demonstrations and debates became the order of the day. Peasants began to understand the meaning of strange words such as 'constitution'. The Peasants' Union and parallel organisations among the workers showed that political organisation had reached grass-roots level. The formation of the first *Soviet*, or Council of Workers' Deputies, in mid May in Ivanovo-Voznesensk was an important turning point in the politicisation and political organisation of the labour movement. Others followed, and the St.Petersburg Soviet in October was an impressive example of direct democracy which played a key role in the general strike and was a genuine alternative source of political authority until its suppression.

The Problem of Empire

A third way in which Russia's traditional order was challenged by the realities of the modern world in 1905 was the threat posed by the non-Russian nationalities of the Empire. The 1897 census had shown, using language as its test of nationality or ethnicity, that non-Russians composed 55.7 percent

of the total population, even if nearly three quarters were Slavs.⁹ Russia had extended her land frontiers dramatically, and embraced over a hundred ethnic groups. The Russian Empire was a complex mix of races, cultures, religions and languages, but the Tsar and his government insisted on ruling it as a single entity, in a highly centralised manner. The only major exception, after the suppression of the Polish revolt in 1863 and the attack on Polish privileges, was Finland, which was allowed to retain its own constitution and particular privileges. Nevertheless, for all its centralisation, Tsarist rule promoted considerable ethnic inter-action. For instance, Baltic German, Caucasian, Polish and other local aristocracies were to be found prominently represented in the ranks of the imperial bureaucracy. The Tsarist Empire extended itself generally by conquest, and maintained its authority by force. And yet Russian rule did in some ways benefit many local populations, whether in terms of economic or educational progress, or simply by imposing peace in place of inter-ethnic conflict in the many areas of intricately mixed populations. But these positive aspects of empire ironically brought in their train new challenges to imperial integrity. Nationalism had become a very powerful force in late nineteenth century Europe, and had extended its impact to the Russian Empire. In its early stages, national consciousness tended to be developed by a native intelligentsia, in this case sometimes helped by members of the Russian intelligentsia. But for its extension it relied upon a wider literate urban and industrial community, such as the Russian Empire was promoting in many of its borderlands. The Tsarist government reacted firmly but often insensitively to nationalist aspirations in the late nineteenth century. The policy loosely described as Russification involved the promotion of Orthodoxy at the expense of other religions, pressure to use Russian rather than the local language in education, courts and official matters, and the undermining of local traditions and privileges. The Jews felt that they were being particularly discriminated against, with restrictions on their place of residence, quotas limiting their rights to secondary and higher education, and other such measures. Some of the non-Russians were no more than ethnic groups, such as many of the Siberian tribes. Others, like the Finns and the Poles, were very much nations with a long past history of national identity. In a very real sense, the 1905 Revolution was the first great crisis of the Russian Empire. In the non-Russian areas, the general social crisis was strongly tinted with demands for local autonomy or self government, rather than national independence. It is often far from easy to disentangle the national from the social protest. Thus, in the Baltic provinces, around thirty percent of manor houses and estates were destroyed, in part or totally.¹⁰

The unusual violence of these disturbances may in part be explained by ethnic tension between Estonian and Latvian peasants on the one hand and German landowners on the other, but it may also be accounted for by the landless emancipation of these Baltic provinces, which had left behind a bitter legacy of hatred. The temporary collapse of central authority also allowed inter-ethnic tensions to erupt in 1905. In Tiflis, for instance, conflict flared between the Georgian under-class and the Armenian merchants and businessmen who ran the city.¹¹ Muslims and Armenians killed each other on the streets of Baku.¹² The widespread pogroms against the Jews were another indication of the strength of underlying racial friction.

The Survival of the Autocracy

If the autocracy temporarily lost control of the situation in 1905, this was in large measure due to rifts within the ruling elite, and a growing alienation from the regime of significant sections of the upper ranks in society. The Decembrists' revolt in 1825, when aristocratic guardsmen demanded a constitution, foreshadowed the subsequent development of a revolutionary intelligentsia, which was to a significant extent recruited from the children of the gentry. But westernisation, and also resentment of the bureaucratic intransigence of the political order, went deeper and wider in society than that. Moreover, the self-interest of the nobility began to turn them into critics of the government. There was a widespread belief that not enough was being done to protect their economic interests as landowners, challenged as they were by American competition and the fall in world grain prices. Politically, they felt that they were being sidelined by the growing power of the bureaucracy.¹³ These divisions at the top were reflected in the uncertainty with which the regime reacted to the crisis. An inept mixture of concessions and repressive actions, arousing expectations and then alienating ever wider sections of the population, was characteristic of the government during the first stages of the crisis. It seemed to be poised uncertainly between Western pluralism and Asiatic despotism.

Given the deep-rooted and wide-ranging nature of the crisis, it may seem surprising that the autocracy survived. Any explanation has to start with the regime's long experience in and tried procedures for dealing with disorders. Regulations of 1881 allowed provincial governors to rule by extraordinary regulations, and in effect to devise their own procedures to deal with emergency situations. Martial law was frequently imposed. Administrative exile was increasingly used to rid cities of those regarded as troublemakers. Governors thus had virtually limitless powers of initiative, backed not just by police but also by military force, in the shape of the garrisons quartered in all provincial capitals. This well-oiled machinery of repression was available in 1905, and was used effectively in late 1905 and through 1906, as field courts martial and military force restored order and the Tsar's control. There were two large waves of mutinies in late autumn 1905 and mid 1906, but not all were involved, and loyal troops were used against rebel comrades. In John Bushnell's view, the government's decision to initiate decisive repressive measures in itself helped to end mutiny.

'The overarching reason for the end of the soldiers' revolution was that the government's determination to restore civil order altered the soldiers' perception of the régime's authority. The message got through at different times in different places, but when it did the soldiers' reaction was everywhere the same: mutinies ceased abruptly, and soldiers joined in the extirpation of civilian revolution.¹⁵ The Tsar's recovery of nerve was in itself a reason for his survival.

The nature of the revolution was also a reason for its ultimate failure. It seemed as if every group and sub-group in society was pursuing its own vested self-interest, from bishops demanding the restoration of the Patriarchate and conciliar government of the church to women's groups calling for female emancipation and Moscow prison guards insisting on the removal of a corrupt prison director and on free government provided firewood.¹⁶ A common concern for basic civil rights was insufficient to provide real unity to such disparate oppositional forces. They did not have the force at their disposal to overthrow the Tsar, whilst he, for all his early irresolution, neither lost all his authority nor the means of enforcing it. Moreover, whilst disturbances were widespread, not all were involved. Only one in eight of village schoolteachers joined the Teachers' Union, even when it seemed that liberation was at hand following the October Manifesto.¹⁷ The large majority was too frightened, indifferent or loyal to raise its head above the parapet. In truth, society was deeply divided, and the Tsar was to find that he had a significant degree of support in society. Many of his gentry critics became scared by the rural violence and rallied to the autocracy. The October Manifesto, with its imprecise constitutional promises, may have encouraged liberal reformers, but it also outraged loyalist opinion. Large crowds gathered in cities throughout the Empire and, often blessed by the Church, mounted noisy and often violent loyalist demonstrations. Moscow butchers who chased students with their meat cleavers at the ready and Odessa day labourers who beat Jews to death no doubt all believed that they were carrying out the will of the Tsar in wreaking vengeance on his enemies. Such loyalist passions helped to nerve the Tsar to carry out his campaign of military repression.

The forces which had led to the crisis of 1905 did not go away. The process of economic modernisation continued apace, with its undercurrent of social discord and a revival of a dangerous strike movement after 1911. Social modernisation and the emergence of a modern mass society was speedily transforming Russia into something approaching a civil society. The so-called 'constitutional experiment' after 1905 may have seemed to have been a failure, but although Russia had not gained a constitution, it had achieved the legalisation of a considerable degree of political activity. National consciousness among the non-Russians such as the Ukrainians was fast developing into full blown nationalism. The underlying tensions remained and the Great War was to bring them to breaking point. But this time the Tsar was to be abandoned by his generals and even by most of his relatives who urged him to abdicate. The will of the ruling elite to survive had gone, shaken by crisis and a lack of confidence in the actual person of the ruler. Society was no more united than before, but it had learned lessons from 1905. The revolutionary year of 1905 had perhaps, above all else, been a year of widescale political education. In February 1917 liberal elements of society were ready and waiting to form an alternative government, and workers, soldiers and their deputies moved immediately to form Soviets. Only in that sense had 1905 been a dress rehearsal for 1917, but the lines had been greatly rewritten.

NOTES

1. For a good account of the Kishinev pogrom, see Edward H. Judge, *Easter in Kishinev, Anatomy of a Pogrom*, New York and London: New York University Press, 1992.
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3. See Scott J. Seregny, *Russian Teachers and the Peasant Revolution. The Politics of Education in 1905*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989, and Nancy M. Frieden, *Russian Physicians in an era of Reform and Revolution, 1856-1905*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.
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6. Theodore H. Friedgut, *Iuzovka and Revolution*, Volume 1, *Life and Work in Russia's Donbass, 1869-1924*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, pp.82-111.
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9. For more details, see Hans Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution, 1881-1917*, London and New York: Longman, 1983, pp.182-83.
10. I am indebted for this point to Dr. Peter Waldron of the University of Sunderland.
11. Ronald Gregor Suny, 'Tiflis' in Michael F. Hamm (editor), *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, pp.274-77.
12. Audrey Altstadt-Mirhadi, 'Baku', in Hamm, *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, pp.306-07.
13. G. M. Hamburg, *Politics of the Russian Nobility, 1881-1905*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1984, passim.
14. See, for instance, Gregory L. Freeze, *From Supplication to Revolution*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp.224-27.
15. John Bushnell, *Mutiny amidst Repression. Russian Soldiers in the Revolution of 1905-1906*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, pp.142-43.
16. Freeze, *From Supplication to Revolution*, pp.194-96, 220-21, 229-36.
17. John Morison, 'Education and the 1905 Revolution', *Revolutionary Russia*, Vol.1, No.1, June 1988, p.13.

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New Interpretations of Lenin for a Post-Communist Age

BERYL WILLIAMS

One of the most exciting parts of the policy of *glasnost*, or openness, inaugurated by Mikhail Gorbachev in his attempt to reform the Soviet Union, was the re-examination of the Soviet past. In a speech to representatives of the media in February 1987 Gorbachev declared "there should not be any blank pages in either our history or our literature". He later made it clear that he was concerned not to abolish socialism and still less to destroy the Soviet system, but to attack the "command administrative economy" of the Stalinist years and return to what he saw as the true socialism of the Leninist era¹.

Encouraged by the Soviet leadership; journalists, dramatists and film-makers took up the challenge with enthusiasm. Television programmes exposed the extent of the purges of the 1930s, interviewed survivors of the camps, recounted for the first time the horrors of the famine which followed the collectivisation of agriculture, and attempted to explain the origins of the Stalin phenomenon. Novels like *Dr. Zhivago* and the works of Solzhenitsyn were published in the Soviet Union. The party authorities acknowledged responsibility for the massacre of Polish army officers at Katyn during the Second World War and the secret clauses of the Nazi-Soviet pact which led to the incorporation of the Baltic States and began the rehabilitation of the victims of the show trials of the 1930s. In particular, Bukharin and the economists of the 1920s, who were closely associated with the economic policies of the 1920s, were cleared of all crimes.

Gorbachev, unlike Khrushchev, allowed criticism not just of Stalin himself but of his policies from the First Five Year Plan onwards. His concern was, by admitting the mistakes of the past, to get popular support for his policy of *perestroika*, for the reform of the economy. However, like Khrushchev, he also attempted to couple his criticisms of the Stalin era with a return to a revised and reinterpreted cult of Lenin to give legitimacy to his new approach. Lenin was to be used to sanction the major policies of the Gorbachev era; *glasnost*, *perestroika* and even the third policy of democratization.

Of the three policies *perestroika* was the easiest to link with Lenin. One of the models for the Gorbachev economic team was the New Economic Policy of the 1920s, and the introduction of co-operatives, the allowing of a semi-market sector of the economy and the opening up to the West, all had obvious parallels with NEP. The Leninist model used by Gorbachev's economic advisers was very much the late Lenin of the 1920s.

Glasnost and democratization were more difficult, but the attempt was made. A book of quotations, called *V. I. Lenin on Glasnost*, appeared in 1989. Much was made of Lenin's ability to admit his mistakes, especially the abandonment of War Communism and the introduction of NEP. But it was the decision to democratize the Soviet system; initially by allowing a choice of candidates to soviet elections and then by allowing other parties, popular fronts and representatives of professions and interests to stand for election to the Congress of People's Deputies, in 1989, that led to the most radical reinterpretation of Lenin.

The attempt to legitimise the policy of democratization through reference to Lenin drew heavily on the ideas of the Soviet dissident historian, Roy Medvedev. The idea that Lenin was essentially a democrat and that he had intended to legalise other socialist parties and return to a socialist democracy as part of NEP was an essential part of Medvedev's alternative reading of Lenin². One commentator wrote in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* in 1988: "Lenin prepared us for that (i.e. democracy) but he didn't manage it — he didn't live long enough"³. General Volkogonov in his biography of Stalin, called *Triumph and Tragedy*, took an identical line, that the democratic potential in Leninism was destroyed, after his death, by Stalin.

This portrayal of Lenin became widely influential by 1988, but, as *glasnost* and a free press became more established, it proved impossible for the party to ensure its complete acceptance, and soon open criticism of this "alternative Lenin" began to appear in the Soviet press. One exasperated writer complained "Lenin's viewpoint is blatantly liberalised nowadays. The person bearing Lenin's name is a kind of Chekhovian intellectual"⁴. Lenin's policies during the period of War Communism came under specific attack. The economist, Selyunin, launched a bitter critique of Lenin's use of arbitrary terror, linking it directly with the Stalinist purges of the 1930s and with the administrative command

system and its use of forced labour. He rejected the Gorbachev attempt to separate Lenin from Stalin and declared the system not only had no democratic potential but was inherently unreformable. His explanation of the Soviet system linked it to the tsarist tradition of modernisation from above by force and to the utopian elements in Marxism⁵.

Other liberal critics, for example, the philosopher, Tsipko, in one of the most influential series of articles of the period, also attacked the founders of Marxism itself, saying, "the fault lay not with the moustaches but with the beards", and he drew a clear distinction between Soviet democratic centralism and Western social democracy⁶. By the autumn of 1990, when Gorbachev temporarily abandoned his reform attempts and turned to the military-industrial complex and the party hardliners for support, the conflict over Lenin's legacy remained unresolved. The attempt during the winter of 1990-1991 to rehabilitate the cult of Lenin could not prevent the Soviet Union's demise in the months following the attempted coup in August 1991⁷.

With the collapse by the end of 1991, of the party and the state that Lenin created, and the opening up of the archives, more material has become available. Volkogonov's new biography of Lenin, using hitherto unpublished material, has now appeared, as has the third and final volume of Professor Service's major work, *Lenin. A Political Life*, also based on archival sources⁸. New material has also come out in the Russian press and in academic journals. Perhaps we are now in the position of being able to test more accurately the merits of the Medvedev-Gorbachev approach to Lenin and democracy.

It should be said immediately that neither of the major new works by Service and Volkogonov bears out the democratic hypothesis. Volkogonov has radically shifted his viewpoint from a democratic Lenin to a Jacobin one. Nor has Service, although finding many interesting and previously unknown nuggets in the archives, changed his own interpretation of Lenin as a result of new material. If there is startling new evidence of a Leninist change of heart at the end of his life which takes us further than the material published in the Khrushchev period, it still awaits discovery.

What was insufficiently discussed in the late Soviet debate on Lenin, however, was a definition of democracy and what Lenin meant by it. To do this, one should examine a number of key moments in early Bolshevik history, when the issue of democracy came to the forefront. These are the possibility of a coalition-socialist government in the weeks after October 1917 and the closure of the Constituent Assembly, and the introduction of NEP and Lenin's last writings.

In 1917, Lenin made a clear distinction in his writings between what he called "bourgeois democracy", or parliamentarianism, and "revolutionary democracy", or all power to the Soviets. Before the First World War, Lenin had assumed that the future revolution, even if led by the proletariat, would be a bourgeois one, leading to a democratic republic. After 1916 and the writing of *Imperialism*, however, he began to theorise beyond the bourgeois phase. By October he saw his task as one of destroying the bourgeois state and replacing it with a "dictatorship of the proletariat", the intermediary stage in the Marxist progression between the overthrow of capitalism and the introduction of socialism. The nearest thing to a model for this was to be found in Marx's praise of the Paris Commune, and Lenin frequently referred during this period to "the commune state".

There were two interconnected debates within the top leadership of the Bolshevik party going on over the weeks immediately prior to and immediately after the October Revolution. The first was over Lenin's insistence on a party seizure of power before either the Second Congress of the Soviets or the Constituent Assembly met. In two letters sent from Finland in the middle of September, Lenin urged immediate action. "History will not forgive us", he wrote, "if we do not assume power now..... We shall win *absolutely* and unquestionably"⁹.

The reaction from the Central Committee ranged from horror to incredulity, and it was not until Lenin's return to the capital that the vote went his way. Zinoviev and Kamenev objected strongly and published their objections in Gorky's newspaper, *Novaya Zhizn*. "The Constituent Assembly plus the Soviets - here is that mixed type of state institution we are going towards", they argued. "Based on this our Party's policy gets a tremendous chance of real victory"¹⁰.

What was behind their opposition was a desire to proceed with a degree of legitimacy. By waiting for the Constituent Assembly, or at least the Second Congress, the party could hope to lead an all-socialist government. But it would be a socialist coalition. Zinoviev and Kamenev were quite prepared to work within such a government based on the Congress of Soviets after October. Moreover, there is ample evidence that the slogan "all power to the soviets" meant a socialist coalition government to the

factory committees, the railway union, the Kronstadt sailors and other Bolshevik supporters in October, who were not in favour of power passing to one party alone.

As late as 4 November, Zinoviev and Kamenev, among others, walked out of a session of the Congress of Soviets and resigned from the new government, arguing "It is vital to form a socialist government of all parties represented in the Soviets. We consider that a purely Bolshevik government has no choice but to maintain itself by political terror.... We cannot follow this course"¹¹.

Lenin remained strongly opposed to a coalition government, especially with the Mensheviks. On 1 November he had declared, "our slogan is no compromise, a homogeneous Bolshevik government" and threatened to go to the sailors for support¹². His attack on his erring comrades shows that, for Lenin, Bolshevik rule and Soviet power were identical. He accused them, by entering into talks with the other socialist parties, of "betraying all the fundamental tenets of Bolshevism and the proletarian class struggle.....there can be no repudiation of the purely Bolshevik government without betraying the slogan of Soviet Power"¹³. Although prepared to consider reinstating the Mensheviks and SRs into the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, he was concerned to keep them out of the newly-formed government body, *Sovnarkom*. The split within the party leadership was healed and the Left SRs briefly joined the government in December, which defused the issue for the time being, but it was clear that many Bolsheviks saw no objection to some sort of socialist pluralism.

The second debate was over the calling of the Constituent Assembly, the long-awaited elections to which having finally taken place in November. Lenin's reasons for closing this, the first freely-elected parliament in Russian history, after only one day, are important in understanding his concept of democracy; a concept that neither Zinoviev and Kamenev, nor commentators under Gorbachev, seem to have appreciated.

Before his return to Russia in April 1917 Lenin had rejected bourgeois constitutionalism with scorn, and similar comments punctuate his *State and Revolution*. "Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich; this is the democratism of capitalist society"¹⁴. However, during 1917, the Bolsheviks, and Lenin himself, supported the calling of the Assembly, which was obviously a highly popular issue.

Zinoviev and Kamenev had hoped that, with Left SR support, the Bolsheviks might get a majority in the Assembly, but that proved to be wildly optimistic. The Bolsheviks obtained a quarter of the votes, and even with the Left SRs came nowhere near controlling the institution. Lenin, therefore, in his *Theses on the Constituent Assembly*, took the line that the peasantry had been tricked. The peasants would have voted for the Left SRs if they had been aware that the party had split. The Left SR and Bolshevik land policies were the same. Lenin therefore assumed that the vote was misleading. The peasantry had changed their minds¹⁵.

Lenin returned to his justification for the closure of the Assembly two years later in his reply to a book on the elections by Sviatitsky¹⁶. The decree of dissolution had already stated, "the old bourgeois parliament is effete and incompatible with the aims of realising socialism. It is not general, national institutions but only class institutions that can overcome the resistance of the propertied classes and lay the foundations for a socialistic society"¹⁷. The Constituent Assembly was the highest form of democratic parliament possible in a bourgeois republic, and thus it had been right to argue for it before October, but under the transition to socialism it automatically became a bourgeois and reactionary force.

Moreover, the votes of peasants could not be allowed to delay a proletarian revolution. Universal suffrage could never reflect the will of the people because, under tsarism, the masses had been kept too poor and too ignorant to know their own interests. "Class consciousness, perception and a wide political outlook" could not be expected under capitalism. As Trotsky was to declare to the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets, "we have trampled underfoot the principles of democracy for the sake of the loftier principles of social revolution"¹⁸.

So, by January 1918, "democracy" was being contrasted with "socialism". Bukharin declared in the Constituent Assembly itself that "before us..... is that watershed which now divides the entire Assembly into two irreconcilable camps, camps of principle ... for socialism or against socialism"¹⁹. To Lenin, the Constituent Assembly was incompatible with socialism because it was a national body, not a class one. The same argument is to be found in *State and Revolution*. In the transition from capitalism to communism the concept of democracy changed. The dictatorship of the proletariat was

a dictatorship over the exploiting class. The result, Lenin explained, was that “alongside an immense expansion of democratism which *for the first time* becomes democratism for the poor, democratism for the people and not democratism for the rich, the dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of exclusions from freedom in relation to the oppressors ... where there is coercion there is no freedom and no democracy”²⁰. Full democracy was not possible until communism had been achieved and the state withered away.

There were a series of protests from socialists in Russia and Western Europe about the closing of the Constituent Assembly. One of the most telling was by Kautsky, who argued that the abolition of democracy was only justified “on the unjustifiable assumption that there really exists an absolute truth and that the Communists are in possession of that truth”²¹. But, for Lenin, that was exactly the position. The Marxist laws of scientific socialism were absolute truth, and the Bolsheviks, as the vanguard party of the proletariat, were in possession of that truth.

If socialist consciousness had to be brought from outside into the working class by the vanguard party, then workers’ consciousness, like that of the peasantry, if outside the party, was bourgeois, as was that of other so-called “socialist” parties. Thus, censorship of the press could be justified by arguing that non-party press would be by definition bourgeois and therefore harmful to the true interests of the class. Worker opposition, like peasant revolt, could also be explained by lack of true consciousness.

The influence of Plekhanov is noticeable in Lenin’s argument, even if by 1917 Plekhanov would not have agreed with him. It had been Plekhanov who, in 1903, had justified abandoning universal suffrage for the good of the revolutionary cause. At the Second Congress of the RSDLP, Plekhanov had argued that

“the success of the revolution is the highest law. And if, for the sake of that success, it would be necessary temporarily to limit the application of one or another democratic principle, it would be a crime to shrink from such a restriction ... even the principle of universal suffrage must be regarded from the point of view of this highest principle of democracy”²².

In 1917, Lenin convinced himself, if not all his followers, that Russia could begin the transition to socialism through a dictatorship of the proletariat. Believing that the proletariat, or at least its conscious element, supported him, he encouraged to the full what he called “the creative power of the masses”. The commune state was to be marked by the fullest popular participation in political life. After October, Lenin recalled telling a delegation of workers and peasants, “you are the power, do all you want to do, take all you want”²³. The ideal was laid down in *State and Revolution*; the army, police and bureaucracy would be abolished and replaced by the people and everyone would participate in administration: “under socialism all will govern in turn and will soon become accustomed to no-one governing”²⁴.

Professor Liebman has commented “one cannot but note the deeply democratic inspiration behind the ideas”²⁵, but, as we have seen, it was not a Western model of political democracy that inspired Lenin. It was a participatory model, certainly, but one based on class conflict and state terror, which allowed no opposition, created no checks and balances within the government machinery it established, and which A. J. Polan has categorised as leading to “the end of politics”²⁶.

How far did Lenin see the problems created by this democratic model, and how far did he, as recent Russian writers have argued, seek to change it once the Civil War was over? By 1918, with the introduction of centralisation, one-man management and restriction of the activities of the factory committees and local soviets, Lenin recognised that he had been over-optimistic as to the consciousness of the working class as a whole. Strikes and worker discontent were constant throughout the Civil War, from protests about the closing of the Constituent Assembly to the Kronstadt revolt. Yet Lenin could still regard the Left Communists’ concern with the relationship between the party and the class as ridiculous as arguing whether the left leg or the right arm was more important to the body.

He opposed all attempts by the left wing of the party to allow more class initiative outside the party. He brought *Proletkult* under the control of the Commissariat of Enlightenment in 1920, arguing that only through party guidance could a communist culture be developed. “The Proletarian class = the Russian Communist Party = Soviet power”²⁷. At the Tenth Party Congress in 1921 he attacked the Workers’ Opposition in his best schoolmaster’s language, “Marxism teaches that only the political party of the working class, i.e. the Communist party, is capable of uniting, teaching and organising a vanguard of the proletariat and the whole mass of the working people” against “the inevitable petty-

bourgeois vacillations of this mass.”²⁸ The banning of factions in the party at this conference curtailed even democratic procedures within the party itself.

During the Gorbachev years, Russian reforming Leninists argued that if Lenin had lived he would have expanded the New Economic Policy into a New Political Policy. At the beginning of NEP the opposite was true. The terror against opponents was, if anything, increased. The end of the Civil War saw the increased persecution of the Church, and Lenin's letter ordering that the famine be used as an excuse to seize church treasures and attack the Church as a whole has now been published²⁹. Large numbers of intellectuals were expelled from the Soviet Union and the trial of the SR party in 1922 was the first of the major show trials of the Soviet period.

The argument has, however, focused on the last months of Lenin's life and his last writings, which emphasised gradualism, the importance of cultural development and co-operation with the peasantry. Two Russian historians have recently argued that he intended to liberalise the régime and legalise the Mensheviks³⁰.

The question of allowing multi-party elections to local soviets and discussions with the Mensheviks surfaced during the Tambov revolt. Again, some Bolshevik leaders supported this solution, but Lenin himself spelt out that there was no such thing as democracy in abstraction. The class context was all-important. It was for this reason that the bourgeoisie was disenfranchised and peasant votes counted for less in soviet elections than those of the proletariat. Rationing was similarly differentiated. Freedom for capitalists or for parties he labelled petty-bourgeois remained impossible³¹.

At the Eleventh Party Congress, Lenin's speech was firmly opposed to any concessions to the Mensheviks; “our revolutionary courts have to shoot you for admitting publically that you're a Menshevik”³². In March 1923, Menshevik “experts” were expelled from state institutions and the party members expelled or arrested. Recent archive material does not seem to bear out ideas of political pluralism at the end of Lenin's life. He, personally, pressed for the death penalty for the SR leadership, and his hatred and fear of Menshevism remained with him.

With regard to his famous testament and his solutions to what he recognised as bureaucratic distortions and chauvinistic abuses towards the national minorities, particularly Georgia, he proposed little that was new. The party was to be cleansed and made more accountable to its own members. The system was not to be changed. The Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate was to be enlarged in size and more workers were to be brought onto the Central Committee. Stalin was to be removed as General Secretary but not, presumably, from the Politburo. None of this assumes a change from a one-party system into a more democratic structure. As Professor Service has concluded, “Lenin lived and died a Leninist”³³.

In his 1902 pamphlet *What is to be Done?*, Lenin concluded “it is necessary to dream!”. What he dreamed of was a “regular army of tried fighters ... social democratic Zhelyabovs from among our revolutionaries and Russian Bebels from among our workers who would take their place at the head of the mobilized army and rouse the whole people to settle accounts with the shame and the curse of Russia”³⁴. His anti-liberalism was clear in his early writings and it never left him. His dream of a socialist future, of a classless society raised to new industrial and cultural achievements by electricity and collectivist discipline has been admired by many. Its ultimate failure, perhaps its impossibility, is ~~not~~ apparent. To accuse him of being a closet democrat is to add insult to injury. Lenin himself would have been scathing in his polemics against his defenders of the 1980s. ©

NOTES

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4. *ibid.* 17.1.1988
5. *Novyi Mir* No. 5, 1988
6. *Nauka i Zhizn* No's 11 & 12, 1988; 1 & 2, 1989
7. Gooding, *op.cit.*

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14. ed. R. Service: V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (London, 1992) p.79
15. *Theses on the Constituent Assembly*, ed. J. Bunyan and H. Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution. Documents* (New York, 1934) p.362
16. *The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, 1919
17. Bunyan and Fisher, op.cit., p.385
18. Quoted in Tyrkova - Williams, *From Liberty to Brest Litovsk* (London, 1919) p.325
19. S. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (New York, 1975) p.61
20. *The State and Revolution*, pp.79-80
21. K. Kautsky, *Terrorism or Communism* (Berlin, 1919) p.176
22. *Vtoroi s"ezd RSDRP, Protokoly* (Moscow, 1959) p.182
23. C.W. Vol.26, pp.261, 468
24. C.W. Vol.25, pp.420-1
25. M. Liebman, *Leninism under Lenin* (London, 1975) pp.195-7
26. A. J. Polan, *Lenin and the End of Politics* (London, 1984)
27. C.W. Vol.44, p.445
28. C.W. Vol.32, p.246
29. *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin*, 20 July 1988. "Right now when people are being eaten in famine-stricken areas we can carry out expropriations of church valuables with the most furious and ruthless energy. We must crush their resistance with such cruelty that they will not forget it for decades".
30. *Iunost*, No. 5, 1988; *Soviet News*, 25 April 1990
31. V. N. Brovkin, *Behind the Front Lines of the Civil War* (Princeton, 1994) pp.185-6
32. Volkogonov, *Lenin*, p.310
33. Service, *Lenin*, Vol.3, p.293
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Victorian Parliamentary Reform in Perspective

DR ROLAND QUINAULT

Parliamentary reform is such a core topic in courses on nineteenth century British history that it has acquired a rather tired and hackneyed image for teachers and students. The predominant focus on the details and authors of the three Reform Acts has obscured the wider aspects and broader significance of parliamentary reform. Historians should look more generally at Parliament and pay less exclusive attention to the franchise; they should also concentrate more on the long-term popular reform movement and less on elite manipulation of the reform bills. Above all, they should extend their horizons beyond England and place parliamentary reform in its proper United Kingdom and international context.

The reform acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884 used to be regarded as clear evidence of the progressive improvement and gradual democratization of the British polity. But over the last thirty years, this Whig interpretation has been criticised by historians who have emphasised the limitations and restrictions of the Reform Acts, rather than their innovations. Consequently Victorian parliamentary politics are now often characterised as essentially undemocratic.¹ This view has been encouraged by the twentieth century orientation of some historians of Victorian politics. H.J. Hanham, for example, has admitted that his study of mid-Victorian elections and party management was chiefly prompted by his contemporary interests.² Hanham's one-sided (but unintentional) focus on constituencies and elections, echoed by other historians, distorted the character of Victorian politics. For the fate of most governments was decided, not by general elections, but by votes in the House of Commons. The first premier who resigned directly as a result of defeat at a general election was Disraeli in 1868. Even in the late Victorian period, four out of the five governments from 1880 to 1895 fell as the result of defeat in the House of Commons. Elections were an increasingly important part of the constitutional process, but they did not always take place. The proportion of constituencies not contested at general elections rose from over a quarter in 1832, to over a half in the 1840s and later 1850s. The proportion fell thereafter, but rose again in the late Victorian period.³

Electoral reform had, arguably, less direct influence on government legislation than other kinds of parliamentary reform. Changes in parliamentary procedure — such as the proliferation of select committees, the increased use of standing orders and the closure of debates — facilitated the passage of a wide variety of reforming legislation. The development of the whip system also helped the passage of reform by strengthening party discipline to some extent. The new Houses of Parliament, built after the 1834 fire, provided improved amenities for parliamentarians who were obliged to spend longer hours at Westminster. The press gallery facilitated the reporting of debates — a vital link between Parliament and people — whilst the ladies gallery enabled a select group of women to exert moral influence on issues such as female suffrage.⁴

The class and occupational background of M.P.s and peers is the only social aspect of Victorian Westminster which has received much attention from historians. In the unreformed Parliaments, landowners constituted the great majority of M.P.s, although there was a sizeable minority of businessmen between 1790 and 1830s. The 1832 Reform Act did not end the parliamentary preponderance of landowners but it did enhance a decline, noticeable from the 1820s, in the proportion of M.P.s coming from old established families.⁵ Most Victorian ministers were still landowners, or had close links with the landed elite, but many came from families newly enriched by commerce — for example: Peel, Gladstone and Disraeli. Ministers in the Commons were often barristers whose legal expertise was valued more than their landed status.

It was not the enlargement of the electorate, but the cost of electioneering which largely determined the character of parliamentary candidates. Therefore legislation which significantly reduced election expenses — notably the 1872 Ballot Act and the 1883 Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act — had more direct influence on the social composition of the House of Commons than the reform of the franchise.⁷ Nevertheless all M.P.s, regardless of their background, had to protect the interests of their constituents and backers if they wished to remain at Westminster. The reform acts obliged M.P.s to address the concerns of new electors and new constituencies. As Palmerston observed, the actors remained largely the same, but they played to the pit and the stalls, rather than to the gallery boxes.

The ascendancy of the landed interest in Parliament was less marked than the ascendancy of the Church of England. Until the late 1820s both Nonconformists and Roman Catholics — a large minority in Britain and a majority in Ireland — were formally barred from sitting in Parliament. Jonathan Clarke has argued that the dismantling of the Anglican ascendancy was a more radical departure from the past than the 1832 Reform Act.⁸ But the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 and Catholic emancipation in 1829 had little immediate impact on the religious composition of Parliament. Half a century after Clarke's alleged 'confessional evolution', a large majority of M.P.s — both Tory and Liberal — and virtually all the members of the House of Lords were still Anglicans. In 1874 not a single Roman Catholic was returned for a British constituency. Non-Anglican representation in the government was even more limited. The first Nonconformist Cabinet minister was John Bright, in 1868, and it was not until 1886 that a Roman Catholic became a Cabinet minister. When Earl Ripon — a former Liberal Cabinet minister and the son of a Tory Prime Minister — became a Catholic convert, in 1874, *The Times* remarked that he had forfeited the confidence of the English people. Ripon only returned to Gladstone's Cabinet when it was thinned by the defection of the Liberal Unionists in 1886.⁹

The links between Church and State remained strong throughout the Victorian period. In 1868 Disraeli told the Queen that the dis-establishment of the Church would be "*a revolution and an entire subversion of the English constitution.*" Although the Church of Ireland was dis-established in 1869, it was not until 1919 that the Church in Wales followed suit and the Church of England remains established to this day. Other features of the 'confessional state' persisted into the twentieth century. Until 1905 two ex-officio Anglicans — the Lord Chancellor and the Archbishop of Canterbury — took precedence over the Prime Minister on official occasions. Even Campbell-Bannerman's 1905 Liberal Cabinet contained only two Nonconformists, whilst Ripon resigned from Asquith's Cabinet when it displayed a Protestant bias.

Clarke's thesis that the reforms of 1828-32 marked the end of Britain's *ancien regime* is unconvincing in respect to the franchise as well. The Great Reform Act was of limited significance in terms of class enfranchisement. Since the unreformed electorate was predominantly middle class, it is unconvincing to interpret the 1832 Reform Act as a triumph for the middle classes.¹⁰ In the boroughs, the £10 occupier franchise benefited the shop-keepers — who were already the largest occupational group in the unreformed electorate. The proportion of working class voters did not increase overall and in some boroughs, like Preston, the ending of the freeman franchise led to a reduction in the working class electorate. But as Robert Lowe later pointed out, "The main principle of the Reform of 1832 was not the reduction of the franchise... The principle was, to take electoral power out of the hands of the corporations."¹¹ The post 1832 electoral system, like the pre-1832 electoral system, was based on property, not equality.¹² In 1850 less than a fifth of all Englishmen were entitled to vote: a proportion which was not much higher than it had been a century before.

The widespread assumption that the Industrial Revolution made parliamentary reform inevitable cannot be sustained. In many respects, economic growth and prosperity strengthened the *ancien regime* by lessening popular discontent and providing new wealth to buttress the old order. The rapidly growing unrepresented cities and towns generated some dissatisfaction with the unreformed system, but they played only a minor role in the enactment of reform.¹³ The 1832 Reform Act did not result in a substantial shift of political power away from the rural to the urban and industrial areas. Although more than half of the 42 new parliamentary boroughs were located in the industrial areas of the North and the Midlands, most had only one M.P. and none had more than two. The geographical distribution of constituencies and M.P.s was still largely based on the assumption that they represented distinct communities rather than aggregate population. Thus Birmingham and Manchester had the same number of M.P.s as small towns like Lewes and Marlow, whilst greater London gained only five new constituencies. Nevertheless 65 extra seats were allotted to the more populous English and Welsh counties, on the grounds that they were very under-represented in the Commons by comparison with the boroughs. Some very small boroughs, like Cricklade, also had their boundaries enlarged and thus became more rural in character. These changes, coupled with the enfranchisement of the £50 tenants by the Chandos clause, has prompted the suggestion that the Reform Act restored and perpetuated the power of the Landed Interest, but this has not been proven.¹⁴ Many of the new county M.P.s represented suburban or industrial areas, like Middlesex and the West Riding of Yorkshire, where farmers were a minority of the electorate.

The reformed electoral system lacked uniformity in regard to both the franchise and the distribution of seats. Although the Great Reform Act abolished the various borough franchises, the clear distinction between the borough and county franchises remained until 1884. Constituencies continued to vary greatly in the size, in terms of both electors and inhabitants. The boroughs continued to be over represented, in proportion to their population, compared to the counties, but this imbalance was gradually reduced by the three reform acts. However the borough electorate increased faster than the county electorate and the disproportion between the two was greatly increased by the Second Reform Act. In 1869 the proportion of the population enfranchised in the English and Welsh boroughs was twice that in the counties — which still accounted for considerably more than half of the total population.

The divergent character of Victorian constituencies and electorates mirrored the varied and localised nature of British society and provided ammunition for those opposed to uniform reform. Robert Lowe, for example, feared that reform would extinguish the small boroughs — like his own constituency of Kidderminster — and give undue influence to London. The separate interests of England, Scotland and Ireland were also exploited by anti-reformers. The first Whig Reform Bill of 1831 was scuppered by Gascoyne's amendment which opposed any reduction in the members for England and Wales: a thinly veiled attack on O'Connell's Irish repealers.

Since Parliament represented the whole of the United Kingdom, parliamentary reform was not merely an English or British issue. Lord John Russell pointed out in 1831 that the disfranchisement of the 84 small Irish boroughs, by the 1801 Act of Union, was a Tory precedent for the Whig disfranchisement of the small English boroughs.¹⁵ The addition of the Irish representatives to the House of Commons in 1801 increased the non-English M.P.s to nearly a third of the total and ensured that they had a potent say in subsequent legislation. It was the support of O'Connell and his Irish repealers which enabled the Whigs to pass the Reform Bill through the House of Commons. They received little direct reward for their pains since the 1832 Irish Reform Act was of minimal significance and did not redress the disfranchisement of the poor Irish county freeholders by the 1829 Catholic Relief Act. The consequence was that Ireland, in the 1840s, had half the population of England, but less than one tenth of the English electorate. The 1850 Irish Reform Act — the most neglected of all reform acts — more than doubled the Irish electorate and prompted demands for a similar increase in the English county electorate. But the Irish boroughs continued to have the smallest electorates and the most anti-reform M.P.s. Many of them were part of the Cave of Adullam which wrecked the Liberal reform bill in 1866.¹⁶

Scotland, like Ireland, also had its own separate reform acts. The Scottish Reform Act of 1832 transformed a moribund electoral system, largely controlled by the Tories, into a vibrant stronghold of Liberalism.¹⁷ The Scottish electorate was increased thirteen fold by the Reform Act, but the number who actually voted in the 1832 general election increased more than a hundred fold. Nevertheless the number of contested elections in Scotland — and the number of voters who polled at them — declined significantly in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1859 proportionately far fewer people voted in Scotland than in England or Ireland.¹⁸ The 1867 Scottish Reform Act largely mirrored its English counterpart and did not have exceptional significance. But it is noteworthy that seven small *English* boroughs were disfranchised to provide new members for both populous Scottish constituencies and the four Scottish universities. Clearly the English prejudice revealed by Gascoyne's amendment in 1831, did not affect Parliament in 1867. Nor did English prejudice operate in the 1885 Redistribution of Seats Act, when 75 English boroughs were disfranchised, but only 2 Scottish boroughs.

The births of the reform acts have been studied in much greater detail than their conceptions. The microscopic accounts of the passage of the reform acts have mostly adopted a myopic focus.¹⁹ Yet all the reform acts were preceded by long periods of gestation without which they would not have come to fruition. The genesis of the 1832 Act can be partly traced back to the reform bills of the early 1780s; the genesis of the 1867 Act to the reform bills of the early 1850s and the genesis of the 1884 Act to 1867. The party leaders who were mainly responsible for those acts had long experience of the reform question. Earl Grey supported parliamentary reform thirty years before he passed the Great Reform Bill; Disraeli planned a Conservative reform bill nearly twenty years before he enacted one; whilst Gladstone favoured franchise extension twenty years before he secured the 1884 Reform Act. The commitment of these men to parliamentary reform was fitful, but then their parties usually had mixed feelings about reform.

The enactment of reform cannot be fully explained in terms of party advantage. The Canningite

Tories and a few Ultras supported the Whig Reform Bills of 1831-2 because they wanted to remove a perceived abuse and to prevent more radical change. In 1867 the Tory government was in a minority in the Commons and required radical help to enact reform. Thus it was Liberal votes which made it possible for Disraeli to 'dish the Whigs'. Derby and Disraeli stressed that they were responding to the desire of M.P.s from both parties to settle the reform question. The Queen advised Disraeli to accept reform amendments carried against him if they were in accordance with the feeling of the House of Commons and of the country.²⁰ The Tory leaders had very little time to calculate the partisan consequences of reform — hence Derby's remark that reform was 'A leap in the dark'. The hurried and ad hoc nature of the Tory reform initiative was revealed by the abortive 'Ten minutes bill' and the belated adoption of a resident ratepayer franchise. The latter reflected both the need for radical support and the need for an intelligible principle on which to base the franchise. The Tory leaders, like the Chartists before them, needed to package and simplify their reform policy in order to sell it to the country.

The thesis that reform resulted from popular pressure has long been out of favour with historians, particularly those of the Cambridge 'high politics' school. Nevertheless there would have been no major reform of Parliament if there had been no 'pressure from without'. As John Morley pointed out, not one of the main reforms "Carried in Parliament without severe agitation out of doors."²¹

Even in the unreformed electoral system, most M.P.s could not afford to ignore public opinion. Paley — a defender of the status quo — observed in 1785 that M.P.s were "So connected with the mass of the community that the will of the people, when it is determined, permanent and general, almost always, at length, prevails." This was much more obviously the case in the mid-nineteenth century.

The popular and sustained demand for reform which arose in the autumn of 1830 quickly led to the fall of Wellington's anti-reform Tory government and then to the Great Reform Act. The Political Unions played an important role in articulating the popular pressure which secured reform.²² In 1866, the revival of popular demand for reform prompted a Conservative government to pass a much more radical reform bill than the Liberals had envisaged the year before. In 1884, popular agitation helped persuade the Tory majority in the Lords to accept the reform bill in return for redistribution. On all the occasions cited above, the general public was somewhat apathetic until reform was rejected or delayed by the Tories. But once public opinion was strongly aroused, Parliament deferred to it with increasing celerity. The Second Reform Act passed through Parliament more quickly than the First and the Third more quickly than the Second.

None of the party leaders made a prolonged or successful stand against public pressure for reform. In 1830 Wellington's opposition to reform ended his premiership and Peel only resurrected his career by accepting the permanence of the Reform Act in his 1834 Tamworth Manifesto. Nor was Palmerston a determined anti-reformer, since he did not oppose Russell's 1854 Bill and his own government introduced a Reform Bill in 1860. In 1867, the future Lord Salisbury resigned from Derby's government rather than accept reform, but he later took office under Disraeli — his *bête noir* — and he arranged the reform compromise with Gladstone in 1884. Salisbury's volte-face was matched by that of Lord Randolph Churchill, who abandoned his opposition to the Liberal reform bill after its second reading, and then welcomed the increasing role of the "English democracy."²³ Despite such evidence that public opinion 'educated' the party leaders, many historians are firm believers in the fuhrer principle and have focused their attention on how the political leaders 'educated' their parties.

The influence which riots exerted on the reform process has also been under-estimated. After the deaths at 'Peterloo' in 1819, the authorities avoided using troops to suppress political meetings and this facilitated the activities of later reform groups, such as the Chartists.²⁴ 'Peterloo' also revived the dormant interest of the Whigs in parliamentary reform. Earl Grey told Parliament that the deaths at 'Peterloo' were "The most important event that had occurred in the course of his political life," whilst the incident prompted his younger colleague, Lord John Russell, to support the representation of the new industrial centres. Both men later played a key role in the passing of the Great Reform Act. The Bristol reform riot of 1831 — which led to many deaths and much destruction of property — was not an archaic relic of 'old England', but carefully targetted and controlled.²⁵ The riot was a direct response to recent events in Parliament, not merely a local protest against the Tory corporation. It stiffened the conviction of the Whig government that reform was necessary in order to prevent disorder. The Hyde Park riots of 1866 occasioned much damage — literally on Disraeli's doorstep — and obliged the

Cabinet to devote much time to public order in London. The influence of the riots on the Tory leaders is difficult to assess, but Disraeli certainly changed his attitude to reform over the next few weeks, even though Parliament was in recess.²⁶ The future Lord Salisbury claimed that the meetings in the manufacturing towns and the riots in Hyde Park had converted "The comfortable classes" to the cause of reform. Cranborne had a personal motive for making this claim, but likewise Derby and Disraeli had their own reasons for not admitting that they had been steam-rolled by the force of public opinion.

But if popular pressure facilitated reform, why did the reform acts not enfranchise more of the working classes? The answer lies partly with the elite's distaste for democracy, but partly also with the limited expectations and desires of the masses. Popular support for reform did not necessarily mean support for universal suffrage or even for franchise extension. Often it simply reflected a general or economic dissatisfaction with the status quo. The language and perception of class interest was little developed before 1832 and even 'The People's Charter' of 1838 contained no specific reference to the working classes. Only one of the Charter's thirteen sections dealt with the franchise and the Chartist commitment to manhood suffrage was qualified by a three month residence qualification.²⁷ The slow pace of franchise enlargement has been taken as proof that Chartist pressure for parliamentary reform was ineffective.

But the great majority of Chartists favoured constitutional agitation and the tone of the 1842 petition showed that they did not really expect their demands to be immediately enacted by Parliament. In the 1850s and early 1860s popular support for reform waned and that enabled anti-reformers, like Robert Lowe, to justify their stance by reference to public apathy. The slow pace of franchise reform was not exceptional, since it generally took a long time for any major reform to be enacted. The thirty years of intermittent working class agitation from the People's Charter to the Second Reform Act was no longer than the time it took the middle classes to enact such reforms as the repeal of the corn laws and the abolition of slavery. Many young Chartists lived to see the working classes form the largest element in the electorate. Robert Gammage, the Chartist historian, wrote in 1885:

When I think of the history of the past and see things as they are now, I am content with our steady progress. The extension of the franchise to county householders is now the law of the land. And that we are driving on toward Manhood Suffrage there cannot be any doubt. Even the enfranchisement of women is just as hopeful.²⁸

Gammage's confident prediction about the enfranchisement of women was justified by contemporary progress. Female suffrage came firmly onto the parliamentary agenda in the mid Victorian period. The debate on the Second Reform Bill prompted the foundation of the National Society for Women's Suffrage and John Stuart Mill's female suffrage motion which was supported by 73 M.P.s. Between 1872 and 1878 annual female suffrage motions attracted the support of 140 to 155 M.P.s - many more than had voted for male franchise extension in the 1840s. In 1885 a female householders suffrage bill passed its second reading, but was rejected by the Lords. But the extent of parliamentary support for female suffrage in the later Victorian period has been overlooked, partly because of a rather misplaced emphasis on the suffragette era and partly because Parliament was preoccupied with another reform issue from 1886 onwards.

Irish Home Rule has usually been regarded as a specifically Irish and nationalist issue, but it was also part of the wider United Kingdom movement for devolution and parliamentary reform. The Reform and Redistribution Acts of 1884-5 consolidated the dominance of the southern Irish representation by the Nationalist party and thus brought the question of Home Rule to the fore. But as late as 1885-6, Parnell was prepared to envisage Home Rule as a kind of extended local government for Ireland.²⁹ The success of Parnell in converting Gladstone and the Liberal party to the principle of an Irish Parliament encouraged imitation in Britain. Tom Ellis, a Welsh Liberal M.P., wrote in 1890:

The whole question of nationality, its claims, rights and restrictions is being thrashed out in the minds of the British electorate and of British statesmen and politicians and it would be intellectual and national blindness to leave Welsh claims to self-government to take care of themselves.³⁰

Proposals for Scottish Home Rule and 'Home Rule All Round' were debated in Parliament in the early 1890s and Dalziel's motion for regional assemblies throughout the U.K. was passed by the Commons — in 1895.

Unionists also appreciated the wider significance of the Home Rule issue. The Oxford jurist, A.V. Dicey wrote in 1886:

Home Rule is no doubt primarily a scheme for the government of Ireland, but it is also more than this: it is a plan for revolutionising the constitution of the whole U.K.³¹

Dicey — like John Major — regarded devolution as an unsatisfactory half-way house to separation. His belief that British M.P.s favoured Home Rule because they were tired of Irish obstruction in the Commons was shared by Gladstone. He tried to sell Home Rule to M.P.s in 1886 by arguing that it would “Restore Parliament to its dignity and legislation to its free and unimpeded course.” Many M.P.s were attracted by the prospect of a House of Commons, free of the troublesome Irish and thus able to address specifically British issues. Gladstone also justified Home Rule by reference to the devolution granted to the British colonies and also to Norway and Hungary.

Gladstone’s reference to home rule abroad illustrates a much wider point. The process of parliamentary reform can only be fully understood if it is placed in a much wider context than that of the United Kingdom. For the enlargement of the parliamentary franchise was not unique to Britain, but was common to most of the western world. Britain, indeed, often lagged behind other countries in the extent to which it had democratized its constitution. For example, the U.K.’s electoral franchise was much more restricted than that of France after 1848 and that of Germany after 1867. France also introduced the secret ballot, equal electoral districts and payment of members well before Britain. The comparative tardiness of British parliamentary reform has been overlooked by historians, like Norman Gash, who have assumed that Britain had nothing to learn from foreign countries. Yet Victorian politicians generally discussed parliamentary reform in an international context. For example, John Bright declared in 1866:

“It is impossible, after what has happened in America and in Germany — with a wide suffrage extending everywhere — that 84 out of 100 of our countrymen should be content to be excluded from the franchise.”

In the following year, the North German Confederation adopted universal suffrage — a much more extensive suffrage than that created by the Second Reform Act. The German reform was praised by the Reform League in Britain which sent its congratulations to Bismarck. Admittedly the German legislature had only limited control over the executive, but then British M.P.s had only limited control over government ministers — many of whom sat in the House of Lords.

The ‘pressure from without’ which exerted most influence on British parliamentary reform came from abroad, most noticeably from Paris. It was the July Revolution in France which was primarily responsible for the revival of the British reform movement in the Autumn of 1830. The Paris barricades provided an object lesson in ‘people power’ and encouraged unrest amongst British artisans and agricultural labourers which led to the fall of Wellington’s Tory government.³² The 1832 Reform Act was preceded by a French reform act which similarly redistributed seats and enlarged the electorate whilst keeping it relatively small. The French reform act, like its English counterpart, was presented as a measure which would particularly benefit middle class property owners. French precedents also encouraged support for the ballot — which became an open question in the Whig Cabinet — and attacks on the House of Lords and the established Church. The disillusionment of British radicals with the 1832 Reform Act paralleled the disillusionment of French radicals with the 1830 revolution. The British government’s negative response to Chartism was matched by the French government’s negative response to the reform banquets campaign, which led to the 1848 revolution. That resulted in a dramatic widening of the French suffrage which prompted a revival of Chartism and reformism in Britain.³³

The revolutions in France encouraged reaction as well as imitation. The shadow of the first French Revolution — particularly the Terror — haunted many early Victorians as Brian Harrison has pointed out.³⁴ The belief that parliamentary reform would lead to violence and revolution remained a potent influence on Conservative thinking before and after the 1832 Reform Act. Wellington’s determination not to concede reform was prompted by his fear that the 1830 French revolution was a re-run of 1789. Yet it was fear of revolution which convinced his Whig successor, Grey, that reform was essential.

Since the image of France was tarnished by revolution, many reformers dwelt on the more peaceful example of the United States. Cobden frequently cited the democratic example of the U.S.A. and Bright described the 1832 Reform Act as “A desperate measure in the direction of Americanizing us.” Bright did not refute Lowe’s allegation that he wanted to Americanize British institutions and he hailed the defeat of the Confederacy, in 1865, as “The event of our age” and went on to observe that “The friends of freedom everywhere should thank God and take courage.”³⁵ Certainly the victory of

the North in the Civil War encouraged British radicals to revive the reform campaign. *Essays on Reform*, published in 1867, was peppered with references to the U.S. and admiration for American democracy was voiced in radical papers like *Reynold's News* and the *Beehive*. America appeared to be a trans-Atlantic utopia where working men had both the vote and higher wages than in Britain.

Nevertheless the United States, in the mid-nineteenth century, was much less democratic than it was widely assumed to be. The American federal constitution granted effective autonomy to the individual States — which was one of the causes of the Civil War — and the separation of powers limited the authority of the President. Hence participation in American presidential elections was not tantamount to voting in British parliamentary elections. The presidential franchise was wider than the British parliamentary franchise, but it increased slowly in proportion to population increase. Suffrage qualifications varied widely from State to State, and blacks, native Americans and unnaturalized immigrants — the latter a large and increasing proportion of the population — were barred from voting. The fact that the United States did not have manhood suffrage was acknowledged by Cobden and Bright and it may have influenced their views on suffrage extension in Britain. In 1858 Bright described the American electoral system as household suffrage, equal electoral districts and the ballot — what he wanted for Britain.

The full democratic example was provided not by America, but by France. In 1848 France had an electorate of over 8,000,000 out of a population of 35,000,000: a proportion of electors to population that was twice as high as that for the U.S.A. in the 1860s. France also provided the ideological theory which underpinned manhood suffrage: the concept of 'The Rights Of Man' and the belief, propagated by De Tocqueville, that democracy was irresistible. By contrast, British and American intellectuals had little time for the concept of natural rights and were generally less than keen on democracy.

Since Victorian parliamentary reform was not unique and was partly precipitated by foreign precedents, it cannot be explained merely by reference to such British peculiarities as advanced industrialization and a long tradition of parliamentary government. Nevertheless British parliamentary reform did have some distinguishing characteristics. Although franchise extension was slow by continental and American standards, it was more secure and less traumatic. The process of reform in Britain did not seriously undermine the peace, stability and prosperity of the country — a clear contrast with what happened in France and the U.S.A. Furthermore there was no reversal of the process of democratization such as occurred in France after 1848 or in the U.S.A. with respect to black rights after 1870. The British concern with pragmatism and liberty, rather than with French or American style theoretical equality, had much to be said for it.

The Victorians regarded the reform acts as important in principle, in practice and in potential and they were justified in doing so. The reforms did not create a democracy in the sense of manhood Suffrage, but they did create a democracy in the sense that the poor — the working classes — became the largest element in the electorate. The concept of democracy was accepted — albeit rather reluctantly — at least a generation before it was fully reflected in the franchise.

Many of the undemocratic features of the Victorian constitution were not removed until well into the twentieth century. Universal adult suffrage was not achieved until 1928 and some property and educational qualifications for the franchise remained until 1948. Even today the British constitution still retains undemocratic features: the hereditary monarchy and peerage; the established Church and party government based on a minority of the popular vote. In the light of both the reforms that were enacted before 1900 and the slow pace of reform thereafter, we should give two cheers for Victorian democracy and two more for a revised Whig interpretation of it. ©

NOTES

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Was the League of Nations really a failure?: the 'new diplomacy' in a period of appeasement

PROFESSOR PETER J. BECK

UN 50

1995 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations (UN). Inevitably, this event has prompted a range of celebratory occasions alongside critical appraisals of the successes, failures and lost opportunities making up its somewhat chequered history. A consensus view is lacking, but in general an acknowledgement of the UN's utility is qualified by a feeling that it could do much better. Even so, the UN's reputation is still more favourable than that of its predecessor, the League of Nations, whose history is dismissed generally as a story of failure. The UN, though a new institution, was built largely on foundations inherited from the League of Nations, whose relatively short life, spanning less than three decades, ended in dissolution in April 1946. The forthcoming fiftieth anniversary of its demise renders this an appropriate moment to consider the case for an alternative point of view.

Parkinson's law of international institutions

C. Northcote Parkinson's well-known book, entitled '*Parkinson's Law*', included a perceptive observation about institutional history:

Perfection of planned layout is achieved only by institutions on the point of collapse ... Just such a sequence can be found in the history of the League of Nations ... Its physical embodiment, however, the Palace of the Nations, was not opened until 1937 ... Everything was there which ingenuity could devise — except, indeed, the League itself. By the year when its Palace was formally opened the League had practically ceased to exist.¹

In fact, soon after the *Palais des Nations* was opened a rather similar view was expressed by Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Minister; thus, Halifax, when speaking to Richard Butler (later Lord Butler), his parliamentary under-secretary of state, 'discoursed on the sad tendency of man to build great palaces like the League building at a time when the ideas they represent incline downward'.²

The opening of the *Palais des Nations*, the League's grandiose headquarters building located on the shores of Lake Geneva, gave the impression of business as usual. But, there was a widening gulf between appearances and realities. The Manchurian (1931-33) and Ethiopian (1934-36) disputes, like the failure of the Disarmament Conference in 1934, proved major stages in what many interpret as the downward spiral resulting in the League's marginalisation in international affairs, the outbreak of the Second World War — the very conflict that the League had been created to prevent — and the organisation's eventual demise. The ideas embodied in the 'new diplomacy' — this was ushered in by the 1919 Peace Treaties and defined to mean arbitration, disarmament, and collective security through the League — appeared to have failed in the face of more enduring methods of *realpolitik* based upon the 'old diplomacy', rearmament, and the use of force. In turn, international histories of the late 1930s have concentrated upon the policies of the great powers rather than the League, even if those threatened or invaded by aggressor states were members.

Whereas many governments seemed to have lost faith in the League, public opinion remained more sympathetic. For example, in Britain, a League-based foreign policy was pressed strongly by the League of Nations Union (LNU), an all-party pressure group drawing support principally from the left and centre of British politics. Membership, having peaked at 407,000 in 1931, declined as the 'thirties progressed (1935: 377,824; 1939: 193,366 members), but the LNU remained an active and influential force in British politics. League supporters, undeterred by the Ethiopian setback and pointing to the 'messianic zeal' for collective security allegedly demonstrated by British people in the 1935 Peace Ballot, blamed the failure of collective security on Britain and other leading members, not the League itself, while believing that League action could work next time, even against Germany.³ Indeed, during December 1936 a packed meeting, staged at the Albert Hall in London under LNU auspices, was used to highlight the support given to a League-based strategy by all sections of opinion; thus,

Winston Churchill (Conservative MP) appeared on the same platform as Sir Archibald Sinclair (Liberal Party leader) and Sir Walter Citrine (General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress).⁴ Subsequently, on 1 January 1937, Churchill and eleven other leading public figures (eg. Sinclair, Clement Attlee) signed a 'Declaration on the Peace of the World: Save the League, Save the Peace' to urge that 'League powers do their duty'.⁵

Meanwhile, the League, though often supported by ministerial rhetoric, figured rarely as a priority in the minds of policy-makers, as reflected in the declining status of delegations sent to Geneva and diminishing media coverage of proceedings. In some cases, the League aroused strong hostility; thus, the German, Italian and Japanese governments, having infringed the Covenant (the League version of the UN Charter), gave notice of withdrawal from membership and refused to recognise League jurisdiction in matters appertaining to their respective interests. As a result, their threats to League members, including Albania, Austria, China, Czechoslovakia and Poland, were treated as unsuitable cases for reference to Geneva.

The peacemaking of 1918-19 has often been interpreted in terms of a conflict between idealism and realism. Certainly, viewed from this perspective, the League of Nations never moved far along the road towards the goal mapped out by some idealists. Despite occasional attempts (eg. 1924 Geneva Protocol) to transform it into a supranational body acting by majority decision and possessing its own forces, the League remained an inter-governmental organisation operating in a world of sovereign states and reliant on members' views and contributions. For peacekeeping purposes, the League should be seen as 'they', its most powerful members, rather than 'it', an autonomous international actor. The League, resembling a puppet, could be no more successful than its most influential members were willing to make it. For any effective action, great power interests had either to coincide or at least not to conflict with each other, as happened in the Greco-Bulgarian dispute of 1925, when it suited the powers to work through, rather than outside, the League.⁶ Such conditions proved rare, and in 1936 Neville Chamberlain stressed that collective security was unattainable because it 'depended on the individual actions of members of the League, whose interest and capacities differed widely'.⁷ As a result, the League steered, or rather *was steered by its leading members*, clear of major international problems.

The League's inter-governmental character explained a growing dependence upon the policies pursued by Britain and France, even if the latter's political instability and military (eg. air power) weaknesses, in conjunction with the assertive attitude assumed by Chamberlain in dealing with the dictators, contributed to British predominance in determining what became the League's non-role in major international issues during the late 1930s. The 1935-40 National Government, albeit elected on a pro-League platform and pressurised by the LNU, was not distinguished by practical support for the 'new diplomacy'. The tendency to encourage the League to evolve pragmatically according to an assessment of British policy interests at the time rather than altruistic internationalist doctrines became more pronounced once Chamberlain succeeded Baldwin as prime minister in May 1937. His preference to act directly, in conjunction with antipathy towards the League and strong criticism of the 'theoretical' idealism displayed by LNU 'cranks' and 'fanatics', reinforced his dismissal of the League option.⁸ By the early months of 1938, he was prepared to go public and risk the opprobrium of the electorate:

At the last Election it was still possible to hope that the League might afford collective security ... I do not believe it now ... The League as constituted today is unable to provide collective security for anybody ... we must not try to delude ourselves, and still more, we must not try to delude small weak nations, into thinking that they will be protected by the League against aggression and acting accordingly, when we know that nothing of the kind can be expected.⁹

Within days, the German takeover of Austria through the *Anschluss* gave substance to this view, which was reinforced by subsequent German moves towards Czechoslovakia; thus, in May 1939 Lord Halifax informed the League Council that 'the changes which have taken place in Europe ... have imposed upon His Majesty's Government a certain course of action [which] has *not been carried through the League*. This was, in the circumstances, impossible'.¹⁰ Or rather, the British government's preference for a policy of appeasement left no room for a meaningful League role.

Even French governments, which generally enjoyed a better League reputation, interpreted policy from a similarly instrumental point of view; thus, national interests rather than those of the League were always to the fore. Anglo-French influence was accentuated by the departure of Germany, Italy and Japan alongside the continued absence of the world's major power, the USA. The Soviet Union's

belated accession in 1934 failed to alter the fact that, during the crucial period immediately preceding the Second World War, a majority of the seven leading powers were non-members. It is easy to forget that the League's peacekeeping role was not unaffected by the attitude of powerful outsiders, most notably, Germany, Italy, Japan and the USA, since there was a realistic reluctance on the part of Britain and France to push for action in a direction likely to arouse their opposition.

The late 1930s

Despite the imposition of sanctions, the League failed to prevent the incorporation of Ethiopia (or Abyssinia) into Mussolini's Roman empire. Britain and France, whose preoccupation with the German problem was reinforced by Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland (March 1936), assigned greater importance to the preservation of good relations with Italy — Rome was seen as part of a future anti-German coalition — than to the protection of the interests of either Ethiopia or the League. As a result, the latter failed what contemporaries interpreted as a 'test case' for its peacekeeping role, while the sense of disappointment was accentuated by the manner in which this setback followed Japan's defiance of the Covenant in the preceding Manchurian dispute. The League's future, or rather its seeming lack of a meaningful future, became a major topic for discussion, as noted in May 1936 by Colonel Pownall, who worked for the British Committee of Imperial Defence:

Italy has won all along the line ... So much for Collective Security and "moral forces" and all the rest of that stuff ... People who rely on them [ie. articles of the League Covenant] for safety will be let down as Abyssinia was let down We now know pretty well where we stand, the Experiment has been made and failed. How lucky that it has been tried out in this minor test case, lucky for all except Abyssinia.¹¹

Naturally, the mood of the next League Assembly held in Summer 1936 was one of pessimism. Emperor Haile Selassie reminded delegates that the issues at stake extended beyond the fate of his country. Other small states, drawing their own lessons about the League's protective capabilities, looked elsewhere for security, as evidenced by Belgium's retreat into neutrality. Meanwhile, the Italian government, following the example set by Germany and Japan, gave notice of withdrawal from the League, while preparing for its next move.

In fact, Germany, Italy's Axis partner, emerged as the major threat to international peace in general and the territorial integrity and political independence of League members in particular. An ambitious rearmament programme, underpinned by moves towards autarchy, provided the basis for pressure on Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. But, German aggression, albeit regarded as the priority international issue and directed against several members, was never treated as a matter for action by the League of Nations, as highlighted in March 1938, when Germany merely announced Austria's cessation of membership of the League as a result of the *Anschluss*. However, the League's marginalisation was illustrated most graphically during September 1938, when the Sudetenland question came to a head. Both the League Council and Assembly were in scheduled session at the time, but neither body was formally seized of the issue, which was resolved, at least in the short term, through bilateral exchanges conducted at Berchtesgaden (15-16 September) and Godesberg (22-23 September) followed by a four-power conference at Munich (29-30 September). Whereas Neville Chamberlain and Eduard Daladier, the British and French Prime Ministers, joined Hitler and Mussolini at Munich, the simultaneous League session received a lesser ministerial presence from both countries. In any case, Hitler, having departed from its ranks within months of his accession as Chancellor, saw the League as symbolising the much hated *status quo* established by the peace treaties. He refused either to recognise its jurisdiction in any matter affecting German interests (eg minorities, boundaries, colonies) or to respond positively to Anglo-French invitations to re-join the League. Indeed, in January 1936, Sir Eric Phipps, the British ambassador in Berlin, reported that Hitler's attitude to the League still 'remains hostile as before'.¹²

Nor was the League any more active regarding other important political issues within and beyond Europe. Despite Chinese appeals, the League proved unable to check the post-1937 revival of Japanese expansionism in the Far East. Similarly, during 1939 it was unable either to thwart Italian ambitions in Albania — yet another League member succumbed to aggression — or to intervene in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), which proved, for a time, the prime focus for international attention. League intervention in Spain was ruled out on the grounds that the civil war was a domestic issue, an

interpretation reinforced by the non-intervention strategy pursued towards the problem by Britain and France.

As a result, during the years preceding the outbreak of the Second World War, the League operated in a relatively hostile environment characterised by the breakdown of international order as well as by a growing stress on rearmament and the use of force. Recent failures and setbacks, in conjunction with falling membership (eg. on part of Latin American states), prompted renewed doubts about the League's political functions. Minor reforms, like the separation of the Peace Treaties from the Covenant in 1938, failed either to remedy the League's basic deficiencies or to retrieve the situation. What was required was a fundamental change of attitude on the part of members rather than a tinkering with the machinery of peace, as highlighted during Summer 1939, when Poland became the crisis point. Once again, neither escalating German pressure nor the actual invasion of Polish territory in September 1939 resulted in League intervention, even if the British and French governments placed on record at Geneva the reasons for their respective declarations of war on Germany. Significantly, both governments rationalised their action in terms of Hitler's violations of the 1928 Briand-Kellogg Pact and the 1939 Polish guarantee treaties rather than successive infringements of the Covenant; indeed, the British government, declaring that 'the Covenant has, in the present instance, completely broken down in practice', put one more nail into the League's coffin.¹³

A successful non-political role

Against this background, studies of the League's political history have invariably presented a story of failure culminating in the UN's creation as a replacement organisation. Even Lord Cecil, one of its leading contemporary supporters, admitted that the League 'failed in the essential condition of its existence — namely, the preservation of peace'.¹⁴ Subsequently, the concentration of historians and international politics specialists upon the Corfu, Manchurian and Ethiopian disputes — the League's major disputes happen to be also its major 'failures' — reinforced this negative impression. Thus, the relevant chapter of F.H. Hinsley's history of international organisation was entitled 'The Failure of the League of Nations', while F.S. Northedge referred to the League's 'sad' and chequered political history: 'The League of Nations formula for collective security undoubtedly failed ... This did not, during the League's history, deter powerful countries from attacking weaker ones'.¹⁵

But was the League a complete failure? In fact, this very question was asked by Lord Cecil in April 1946, when addressing the final meeting of the League Assembly: 'It is common nowadays to speak of the failure of the League. Is it true that all our efforts for those twenty years have been thrown away?'.¹⁶ Cecil moved on to inform delegates that 'The work of the League is purely and unmistakably printed on the social, economic and humanitarian life of the world'. This reminds us that, in the usual rush to judgement, it becomes easy to overlook the fact that assessments of the League's non-political work, whether by contemporaries or historians, are generally far more favourable than those about its more visible political activities. For example, on 26 August 1939, that is, a few days before the outbreak of war, a *Times* editorial, headlined 'Where the League has not failed', focused on its 'remarkably successful' technical work. Similarly several historians have concluded that the League justified its existence merely through its 'vitality', 'universally important', and 'outstandingly successful' humanitarian, social and other work.¹⁷

Governments appeared to value an enhancement of the League's non-political activities, while simultaneously seeking to downgrade, even thwart, political work; indeed, Lord Halifax argued that 'with the restriction of the political aspects of the League, it is precisely (the) education, social and humanitarian activities of the League that must be maintained and developed'.¹⁸ Even the United States government, whose non-membership severely weakened the League, appreciated the everyday benefits resulting from technical cooperation. Functions relating to refugees, the drug trade or traffic in women and children, continued, even flourished, because of their practical utility and suitability to a higher level of international cooperation than more sensitive political topics. Inevitably, the League's record, though generally good, was 'variable' across the range of its non-political functions; for example, successes in dealing with refugees have been contrasted with economic failings.¹⁹

The closing weeks of August 1939 were dominated by the escalation of the Polish crisis, the signature of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and the inexorable march to war. But this period witnessed also the publication of the often forgotten Bruce Report on 'The Development of International Cooperation in Economic and Social Affairs'.²⁰ The report, produced by a League committee chaired by Stanley Bruce (Australian

High Commissioner in London and formerly Australian Prime Minister), summarised past achievements, urged 'the necessity for a rapid development and expansion of the League's work in these fields', and identified future possibilities for meaningful functional cooperation by both members and non-members. From this perspective, the Bruce Report illuminated the cooperative and inter-dependent dimension of international society at a time when political forces were working in the opposite direction. In the event, war hindered the implementation of the report's recommendations, while prompting the reduction, transfer (eg. to USA), and even termination of the League's non-political work. Subsequently, the Bruce Report provided the blueprint for the UN's Economic and Social Council.

The League and the Second World War

The outbreak of the Second World War resulted also in the postponement of the regular Assembly and Council sessions scheduled for September 1939, thereby implying that the League's political functions would be placed on ice for the duration of the war. However, three months later, the League suddenly came back to life as a peacekeeping body in response to Finland's appeal against Soviet aggression.²¹ For the first time for several years, Geneva occupied centre stage for governments, media and opinion, especially as the state of 'phony war' on the western front facilitated a switch of attention elsewhere. For example, the *Daily Sketch* reported that a map covering the Russo-Finnish border replaced one of the western front in the office of King George VI.

On 14 December 1939 the League Assembly, having studied the dispute, declared that the Soviet Union had placed itself 'outside of the Covenant' through its invasion of Finland. A resolution was adopted expelling it from membership. The apparent speed, efficiency and decisiveness with which the appeal was handled led Gilbert Murray, a former President of the LNU, to join others in arguing that greater reliance upon the League option in the recent period might have prevented even the outbreak of the Second World War. But this was wishful thinking, for, in reality, nothing had changed. Neither Assembly resolutions nor the USSR's expulsion from the League saved Finland. Undeterred by League reprimands and sanctions, the Soviet Union continued the invasion. The Finnish government received plenty of moral support, but relatively little practical assistance.²² More seriously, the USSR's refusal ever to return to the League meant that the act of expulsion became in effect the organisation's death warrant; thus, fifty years ago a replacement body emerged in place of the discredited League.

Conclusion

During the inter-war period, the League of Nations proved a novel feature of international affairs. Nothing like it had been seen or tried before, although the post-1815 'Concert of Europe' is often identified as part of its ancestry. The League represented a new factor to be considered during the formulation and conduct of foreign policy by governments. Most histories have presented a story of failure leading to its inevitable replacement by the UN. But, disagreement persists about the reasons: had the League failed the nations, such as because of its novelty and inherent weaknesses, or had selfish governments failed the League?

Inevitably, these debates preoccupied contemporaries. For instance, in Britain, the Labour Party was a strong critic of the National Government's apparent antipathy towards the League, while in 1939 Gilbert Murray asserted that, if only Britain had consistently supported the League system, 'the whole course of history would have been different'.²³ We shall never know, but Britain received, and continues to receive, a large share of the blame for the institution's failure. However, Chamberlain pushed the blame elsewhere:

The historian will come to the conclusion that if the League failed to carry out the policy of sanctions, then it was not due to the action or inaction of this country ... but the real explanation was that it had been sought to impose upon the League a task which was completely beyond its powers.²⁴

Subsequently, Frank Walters, a former member of the Secretariat, published a pro-League history, as evidenced by complaints that 'the process whereby ... the League's authority was undermined had been going on for some years. It was a general degeneration, marked by a few outstanding events ... but moving continuously forward under the ceaseless activity of *nationalist diplomacy*'.²⁵ Walters'

coverage of the Ethiopian crisis illuminated his critique of 'nationalist' tendencies: 'the proceedings of the Council were made to alternate with conversations between Britain, France and Italy, in which the Covenant was often forgotten and the interests of the League were treated as of small account'.²⁶

Debate has continued in the writings of historians and international politics specialists, like James Barros, Ruth Henig, F.H. Hinsley or F.S. Northedge. R.A.C. Parker's recently published book, though primarily promoting an alternative view of Chamberlain and appeasement, offered also a fresh look at the League; thus, Parker's presentation of its contribution to a strategy designed to contain Hitler's expansion suggests that the League dimension might attract greater interest and study in the future as part of the evaluation of alternatives to appeasement.²⁷ In turn, a renewed focus on the League's political potential and support from public opinion, in conjunction with a wider acknowledgement of its substantial non-political achievements, might qualify the usual negative image.

The League of Nations can be dismissed as a fleeting episode in history - it appeared in 1920 and disappeared in 1946 - but the cause of international cooperation survived its demise. Despite accusations of failure, the League represented a significant phase in the history of international organisation in general and of functional cooperation in particular, as stressed in October 1939 by Sean Lester's radio message broadcast to the New York World Fair. Lester, the Deputy Secretary General, observed that the 'reservoir' of experience and knowledge acquired over two decades remained available for peace-making and post-war reconstruction:

It can, in fact, keep alive at least one centre of international collaboration and sanity where men's efforts are cooperative ... The present international organisation must be preserved during this time of crisis for the even greater crisis which may come when the armies are unlocked.²⁸

In the event, the institution failed to survive, but the cause lived on, as noted by Clive Archer's recent history of international organisation:

The whole League system can be seen as a crucial link which brought together the strands of pre-1914 international organization and wartime cooperation into a more centralised and systematic form on a global scale, thus providing a stepping stone towards the more enduring United Nations.²⁹

Today, the fiftieth anniversary celebrations remind us of the UN's more 'enduring' qualities, even if its performance has often left a lot to be desired, as highlighted by the manner in which recent setbacks in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia have renewed debate about the organisation's state of health. But, unlike the League, blame has seldom stuck for long. Nevertheless, for historians, a feeling of *déjà vu* is reinforced by contemporary debates about whether the UN's recent failures are a function of either intrinsic institutional weaknesses, members' policies, or international conditions. From this perspective, the League was a 'great experiment', whose history is not only characterised by more positive features than often depicted in most studies but also casts light upon the opportunities and problems facing international institutions today in the contemporary world.

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Tales of National Insecurity: American Historians and the Cold War

DR SCOTT LUCAS

It should have been an occasion for celebration. With a speed that belied the drawn-out struggle of the Cold War, the Iron Curtain parted, the Berlin Wall tumbled, dictators were arrested or executed, and the Soviet Union fell into disarray. The 'evil empire' was no more.

Yet, since 1989, American historians of the conflict have been beset, first by confusion, then by internecine squabbling. Francis Fukuyama, former State Department staffer turned intellectual historian, may have declared that the triumph of Western democracy was the 'end of history',¹ but the quarrel over who started the Cold War and what it all meant politically, economically, and socially is as vehement as ever.

Unsurprisingly, some historians used the events to vindicate the American foreign policy of the last 50 years. They returned to the 'orthodox' account, prominent in the 1950s, of a valiant United States defending the Free World against the tyrannical designs of Joseph Stalin for world expansion. Prominent in this movement was John Lewis Gaddis, who had built his career in the 1970s with a supposedly 'middle-of-the-road' approach but was now writing:

If the experiences of the twentieth century demonstrated anything at all, it was the arrogance of the assumption that one could create a 'science' of human behaviour that would somehow improve the human condition. Americans asserted no comparable claim; whatever their other deficiencies as a global superpower, in this respect their modesty — a characteristic not often associated with Americans — served the world well.²

However, far from establishing the definitive eulogy of the Cold War, this movement provoked a stiff challenge. The memories of Vietnam, which had nurtured the 'revisionist' school criticizing American foreign policy, and the controversies of Reaganism had not disappeared. Walter LaFeber wrote in 1992:

The 1945 to late 1980s era now appears an American Augustan Age when the problems of the old republic and the threats abroad were disciplined by consensus at home and overwhelming power overseas. Vietnam, Korea, the Middle East wars, and Iran-contra are among the reasons why such appearances deceive.³

The conflict culminated in a dramatic showdown between Gaddis and Bruce Cumings, the author of a two-volume study re-examining American involvement in the Korean War. In late 1993, Cumings turned his fire upon Gaddis and other 'post-revisionists' in an article in *Diplomatic History*, the leading journal for American historians of foreign relations. Starting from the premise that 'the most elemental act of "theory" is to name things', Cumings lambasted the Gaddis school for dismissing some revisionists and tarring others, McCarthy-style, with 'the classical Leninist model of imperialism' to turn 'history into an instrument of politics'.⁴

In June, Gaddis and Cumings debated the issues before the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. The encounter quickly descended from a discussion of historiography into personal criticism. When Cumings renewed his charges that Gaddis ignored the role of theory in historical argument and tarred his opponents with the anti-Communist brush used by historians like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Gaddis responded, 'I'd rather hang out with Schlesinger and his buddies than Heidegger [the German philosopher who supported Hitler's regime] and his buddies'.⁵

Of course, some American historians have avoided the fray, but their attempts to write a considered history of the Cold War raise other problems. One of the most recent studies of the Truman Administration, Melvyn Leffler's *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*, is a balanced, comprehensive account, but it hangs upon Leffler's contention that the focus of American foreign policy was 'national security'.⁶ Unfortunately, 'national security', far from being an objective goal, is tied up with policymakers' perceptions and values. Since the term can be interpreted as a reasoned assessment of the Soviet threat or a shield for American hegemony, it does nothing to bridge the gulf between the 'neo-orthodox' and 'revisionist' arguments.

Another approach has been that of the 'corporatist' school, which has refined revisionism by examining the links between American business and the Government's foreign policy. While the school has produced provocative interpretations of issues like the Marshall Plan, it still rests upon the assumption that economics shapes American goals.⁷ There can be no accommodation of the view that the United States was motivated by its fear of Soviet expansion rather than its vision of a global economy.

Where, then, is the way forward? One interesting possibility has been the emergence of historians looking beyond Moscow and Washington. 'British revisionism' was spurred by Professor Donald Cameron Watt's call in 1978 for an examination of documents recently released under the 30-Year Rule. General books on the foreign policy of the Attlee Government were soon followed by an impressive range of specialist studies, for example, London's policy in post-war Germany or its strategy in the Middle East.⁸ The breakthrough has been reinforced by interchanges between European historians: no doubt 'French revisionism', 'German revisionism', and 'Italian revisionism' will all modify the image of a world made by the two superpowers.

Many American historians of the Cold War have not incorporated the new research into their analyses. For example, Leffler's work, a comprehensive survey of American sources, uses no foreign archives. Those who have taken on the material, for example, the recent release of the East German archives, simply place it within the context of American-Soviet conflict. Issues such as British consideration of a 'third force', a European grouping independent of both Washington and Moscow, are overlooked.

Yet, even if the European dimension receives due recognition, it is questionable if the perspective offers a way out of the historical stalemate. Geopolitical or economic considerations may simply be shifted from Washington to London or Paris, replaying the question of whether Western European countries were defending themselves against the Soviet challenge or trying to extend their influence across the continent. Even more likely, the European dimension can be reincorporated into the vision of a Western Europe eager to be led by American power.

The debate among diplomatic historians about the origins of the Cold War will never be resolved because the answer lies outside the discipline. The conflict did not turn upon the clash of military forces, since the potential cost of atomic warfare precluded direct conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Nor was economic hegemony the essential component. Even if Washington could afford an open-ended commitment to recovery and the 'free market', there was no guarantee that recipients of foreign aid would follow the American blueprint in the long term. The pursuit of political goals through the United Nations was precluded because each side possessed the veto in the Security Council.

Instead, the Cold War became a battle for hearts and minds. Economic and military aid, diplomatic negotiation, and covert action might all be part of a global strategy but they had to be linked to the ideological contest for 'freedom' and 'democracy' against the 'totalitarian' enemy.

The catalyst for this struggle was the Truman Doctrine of 12 March 1947. The Doctrine's limited purpose was the provision of American economic and military assistance to Greece and Turkey, but to convince a skeptical Congress, President Harry Truman portrayed a global contest of good versus evil:

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion and freedom from political oppression.

The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.⁹

Some historians have considered aspects of this ideological contest. As early as 1970, Les Adler and Thomas Paterson wrote about the American perception of a 'Red Fascism'; other articles examined the construction of the Truman Doctrine and Dwight Eisenhower's vision of a 'corporate commonwealth'.¹⁰ Michael Hunt has surveyed ideology in U.S. foreign policy since the Declaration

of Independence, Lynn Boyd Hinds and Theodore Otto Windt have studied Cold War rhetoric between 1945 and 1950, and Deborah Welch Larson has examined the rhetoric and psychological constructions of the officials of the Truman Administration.¹¹

Even as the end of the Cold War was renewing the debate over 'orthodox' and 'revisionist' interpretations, chapters on ideology were being included in anthologies marking the end of the struggle. In recent issues of *Diplomatic History*, cultural historians dissected the projection of gender in the conflict with the Soviets,¹² and a favourable review of the literature of "national security" was greeted with the scathing rebuttal that national security was itself an ideological construction.¹³

However, the effect of this work has been limited. Apart from authors like Noam Chomsky whose work has been excluded from the 'mainstream' of American historiography,¹⁴ there has still been little examination of the systematic incorporation of ideology into U.S. foreign policy in the Cold War. Without that examination, central features of that policy will remain beyond coherent explanation.

A notable example is the treatment of the American policy of 'liberation', the effort to detach Eastern Europe from the Soviet bloc. Until the 1980s, liberation was treated as a phenomenon of the Eisenhower Administration, with portrayals of the Truman policy constrained by the model of 'containment'. Revelations of the CIA's activities before 1953 should have undermined this analysis, but any re-evaluation has been limited.¹⁵ The problem for diplomatic historians is that liberation cannot be reconciled with geopolitical interests. The region was neither essential to American military security nor, with the recovery of Western Europe, necessary for economic expansion.¹⁶

Ideology offers a solution. The Truman Administration's definition of the Cold War as a mission to defend freedom for all, not just for its allies, implied support of an offensive to break up the Communist bloc. An internal review of Government strategy in May 1952 concluded:

Practical and ideological considerations. . . both impel us to the conclusion that we have no choice but to demonstrate the superiority of the idea of freedom by its constructive application, and to attempt to change the world situation by means short of war in such a way as to frustrate the Kremlin design and hasten the decay of the Soviet system.¹⁷

Yet how can the historian, attempting to explain the development of U.S. foreign policy, cope with the abstract nature of ideology? Since there was no defined system such as Marxism, it would appear that the 'values' of a President Truman would have to remain the subject of speculation nor is it clear how those values could be linked to a specific policy.

Fortunately, the U.S. Government has provided a way around the problem. By 1951, it had systematically incorporated ideology into policymaking. First, it developed 'psychological strategy', the organization of propaganda to support political, economic, and military initiatives. Then it equated 'psychological strategy' with 'Cold War strategy'. The projection of American policy was no longer subordinate to specific measures; rather, it incorporated those measures.

Within months of the Truman Doctrine, the Administration launched a two-pronged propaganda assault to secure Western Europe. The overt campaign centred upon the promotion of the Marshall Plan, publicized abroad through the Voice of America and the Economic Cooperation Administration and at home by the 'private' Citizens' Committee to Defend the Marshall Plan.¹⁸ An even more extensive covert program, developed by the Central Intelligence Agency, worked with groups ranging from the Mafia to the Vatican to prevent Communist parties from taking power in France and Italy.¹⁹

The newly-created National Security Council confirmed this two-fold emphasis on psychological strategy in January 1948 with the adoption of NSC 4. The policy charged the State Department with responsibility for "strong information measures to counter" Soviet programs. A top-secret annex, NSC 4-A, assigned oversight of covert psychological operations to the Central Intelligence Agency.²⁰

At this point, the ideological struggle was being integrated with the strategy of containment, but George Kennan, the influential head of the State Department's Policy Planning, had already suggested action "to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power".²¹ In June 1948, the National Security Council established the framework in NSC 10/2: an autonomous Office of Policy Coordination would develop and supervise...

... any covert activities related to: propaganda; economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition, and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and support of indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries

of the Free World.²²

Even as the Truman Administration was securing its position in Western Europe through its reaction to the Berlin Blockade and the formation of NATO, it was emphasizing propaganda “to sustain the hope and morale of the democratic imperatives in these countries and at the same time to take full advantage of actual and potential cleavages among the Communists and ruling groups”.²³ Operations were launched to overthrow the Government of Albania and to build nationalist resistance in Poland, the Ukraine, and the Baltic States.²⁴

While these operations brought little but failure, the U.S. was building an impressive network of State and ‘private’ organizations. Thousands of refugees from Eastern Europe were resettled, often with money from groups like the Ford Foundation, and used in anti-Soviet propaganda and paramilitary operations.²⁵ In June 1949, the State Department encouraged the formation of the National Committee for Free Europe, ostensibly directed by private citizens but secretly funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. Radio Free Europe, the NCFE’s best-known venture, began broadcasting in 1950; similar ventures like the American Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, which broadcast directly into the Soviet Union through Radio Liberty, soon followed.²⁶

This manifestation of ideology through a global offensive against Moscow, was completed in April 1950 with the drafting of NSC 68. The document founded policy upon an apocalyptic struggle between American good and Soviet evil:

Unwillingly our free society finds itself mortally challenged by the Soviet system. No other value system is so wholly irreconcilable with ours, so implacable in its purpose to destroy ours, so capable of turning to its own uses the most dangerous and divisive trends in our own society, no other so skilfully and powerfully evokes the elements of irrationality in human nature everywhere, and no other has the support of a great and growing center of military power.

In this contest, the U.S. had ‘to encourage. . .the emergence of satellite countries as entities independent of the USSR’ and ‘the revival [in the Soviet Union] of the national life of groups evidencing the ability and determination to achieve and maintain national independence’.²⁷

Days after he read this report, Truman launched the psychological offensive by announcing a ‘Campaign of Truth’:

We must make ourselves heard round the world in a great campaign of truth. This task is not separate and distinct from other elements of our foreign policy. It is a necessary part of all we are doing. . .as important as armed strength or economic aid.²⁸

As the National Crusade for a Free Europe organized the “Crusade for Freedom”, with the “Freedom Bell” receiving a ticker-tape parade in New York and a tour of the U.S. and Western Europe, the Voice of America declared that it would roll back the Soviet Union by all means short of war. . .

... making the captive peoples realise they still belong with us. This means weakening the will of the Red Army officers and Red officials at home and abroad. It means keeping the Soviet Bear so busy scratching its own fleas that he has little time for molesting others.²⁹

Attention now turned to the supervision of the ideological program. Various agencies, including the State Department, the Department of Defence, and the Central Intelligence Agency, were handling aspects of the campaign but there was no agency to integrate the various efforts. Truman addressed the problem on 4 April 1951, signing the order creating the Psychological Strategy Board.³⁰ The members of the Board — the Director for Central Intelligence, the Undersecretary of State, and the Deputy Secretary of Defense — would receive “independent” support from a Director, appointed by the President, and a staff planning and developing operations.

The Board’s immediate priority was planning for crisis situations. It reviewed American psychological action if negotiations to end the Korean War were successful or if the negotiations broke down.³¹ It devised a comprehensive anti-Communist assault, supported by at least \$2 million in CIA funds, to prevent the Communists winning the French or Italian elections.³² It developed the plans for the use of East European refugees.³³

Yet, from its inception the Board was looking toward long-term victory over the Soviet system. Staff members outlined a five-year program starting with “a high-hearted crusade — gay, dashing, gleaming, even hilarious — a crusade to let people everywhere choose how they wish to be governed” and culminating with the “collapse of the World Communist Movement” through uprisings supported

by United Nations resolutions and bombing of Soviet railroads and communications.³⁴ No area of the world was excluded. The French and Italian operations were followed by a German Plan in September 1952 and Japanese, Southeast Asian, and Middle Eastern Plans in early 1953.³⁵

The structure for liberation was reinforced in October 1951 with NSC 10/5, which sought 'the maximum strain on the Soviet structure of power, including the relationships between the USSR, its satellites, and Communist China'.³⁶ The PSB, which supervised the CIA's program of covert operations, continually pressed the Administration for action. The Board's Deputy Director bluntly asked in May 1952, 'Does U.S. policy... include or exclude efforts under any circumstances to overthrow or subvert the governments of the satellites of the USSR?'³⁷

In January 1953, President Truman was succeeded by Dwight Eisenhower, who had campaigned against 'the negative, futile, and immoral policy of "containment" of his Democratic predecessor. Ironically, however, it was the Eisenhower Administration that curbed liberation and brought the demise of the PSB.

Stalin's death in March 1953 should have been a godsend, but the State Department was reluctant to accept Operation CANCELLATION, the PSB plan to exploit the vacuum in the Soviet leadership.³⁸ Similarly, the U.S., fearful of military retaliation by Moscow, could give only limited aid to the East German uprising in June.³⁹ The Director of the CIA, Allen Dulles, gloomily assessed any collapse within the Soviet bloc 'will not show up critically for 10 or 15 years yet'.⁴⁰

The PSB unjustly took the blame for the failure of the campaign for freedom. The State Department had always resented the Board as an unwelcome intruder upon its plans, and Eisenhower's Special Adviser for Psychological Warfare, C.D. Jackson, had long believed that official information services missed opportunities, spurred by Radio Free Europe, to break up the Soviet bloc. When the Jackson Committee, a special committee reviewing American propaganda operations, wrongly assumed that the PSB had been "founded on the misconception that psychological strategy exists apart from official policies and actions",⁴¹ the writing was on the wall.

Yet the abolition of the PSB in autumn 1953 did not end the ideological campaign; it simply altered the structure of that effort. The PSB's successor, the Operations Coordinating Board, continued the integration of psychological planning with political, economic, and military activity.

Defined as an adjunct of the National Security Agency, rather than an autonomous agency, the OCB was safe from State Department interference. Within three months, it had organized 23 working groups for policy ranging from intervention in Philippine elections to 'an intensified campaign of exposure of Soviet penetration of the Americas' to development of a pro-American government in South Vietnam and propaganda against the North Vietnamese regime. Special projects such as the dropping of leaflets and Christmas food parcels by balloon over Eastern Europe were also organized.⁴²

Meanwhile, the Eisenhower Administration kept up the pressure against the Soviets with other grand proclamations. The President's speech of April 1953, ostensibly advocating cooperation with Moscow - under the title, "A chance for peace" - elicited "more public interest and excited more favorable comment throughout the world than any official statement of high policy" since the Marshall Plan.⁴³ His 'Atoms for Peace' presentation in December to the United Nations was even more dramatic, challenging Moscow to join the U.S. in channelling atomic development to purposes like energy generation and medical advances.⁴⁴

In short, the Administration, even as it was reviewing the quest for liberation in 1953, was clinging to the hope that it would eventually be feasible to win over "hearts and minds" in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. The National Security Council, in NSC 5412, reiterated its wish to...

... create and exploit troublesome problems for International Communism, impair relations between USSR and Communist China and their satellites, complicate control within the USSR, Communist China, and their satellites, and retard the growth of the military and economic potential of the Soviet bloc.⁴⁵

The CIA continued to train a guerrilla army of refugees and defectors and resurrected the program to detach Albania from Soviet influence. Working with the National Committee for a Free Europe, it also used broadcasts, newsheets, and leaflet drops in Czechoslovakia to promote a "People's Opposition" with 10 demands for political and economic reform. The OCB even devised plans to support 'anti-communist guerrillas on the mainland of China for purposes of resistance and intelligence'.⁴⁶ Nikita Khrushchev's "de-Stalinization" speech of February 1956 did not revive

liberation; it merely encouraged an ideal which had never disappeared completely from American ranks.

Ideology was not the sole determinant of American foreign policy in the Cold War. As the difficulties of the effort to liberate Eastern Europe indicated, no policy could be detached from political, economic, and military considerations. After the failure of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, the ideological impetus for liberation was irretrievably at odds with a diplomatic and military strategy that avoided a direct clash with Moscow because of the likely cost in American lives and the possibility of atomic warfare.

Yet diplomatic historians, caught up in a sterile debate over responsibility for the Cold War, should no longer ignore the influence of ideology. Geopolitics was inextricably bound up with policymakers' constructions of American good against Soviet evil. Deborah Welch Larson argued persuasively in her study of the Truman Administration:

Vital interests are usually defined as those values for which a nation is willing to go to war. There are no geographic factors or commonly understood objective criteria for determining whether an interest is vital; it is a matter of human judgement. In the post-war period, until the disillusioning experience of Vietnam, the United States adopted an expansive conception of its security requirements to include a world substantially made over in its own image.⁴⁷

NOTES

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Reviews

The Cambridge Illustrated History of France

Colin Jones

Cambridge University Press

1994

£22.95

352pp

ISBN 0 521 43294 4

National histories are particularly difficult to write in the late twentieth century. The typical strong story line used to have the nation struggling to break free of the primitive ties of the past and to assert its national character in martial, cultural and economic greatness. In an era which has a much keener awareness of plurality and complexity in political as well as social life, the concept of the nation is itself one which requires justification and exposition. In aiming to meet several different types of audience with this work, Colin Jones succeeds in pointing up some of these complexities but in an increasingly breathless narrative loses the detached and reflective character of the book's opening chapters.

The strengths of this new one-volume sweep through French history are many. The text is clear and easy on the eye. On the whole, the illustrations are a good mixture of the unusual and the expected, mixing media and purpose well. A strong feature is the use of maps, pointing up as a continuing theme the extent, in the geography and in the history of culture and of society, of Regional variations. The book repays the browser, offering a lengthy context caption for its illustrations. On their own, a reading of these captions would yield much understanding of French history. I also took to the mini-biographies which feature in narrative order as a work within the work. A selection of famous figures from Joan of Arc to Alfred Dreyfus pepper the text and widen its audience and its usage.

A safe choice of key topics and events is dealt with effectively, without that kind of complexity of expression which only the dedicated student can penetrate. Each chapter is clearly laid out into dated narrative *chunks*. A full bibliography gives ample pointers to future reading, while the index allows casual reference.

There is, moreover, for a one-volume work, a surprising amount of detailed information where it helps to illustrate a point or bring an incident or development to light. The estimate of 1 million Gallic deaths in the Roman Wars, and a further ½-million-plus enslaved in Italy, put Caesar's adventures into an appropriate perspective for me. Of 107 town capitals in Roman Gaul, 94 are still towns today, while, of 55 contemporary French cities with populations greater than 100,000, 37 were cities in Roman times. These figures pick up the key element of settlement continuity and longevity which is an enduring theme of French history. As late as 1860, French was not spoken in a quarter of the communes of France — only the advent of mass compulsory education, the experience of mass warfare and the development of national media broke down these long-standing Regional language divisions. At a later date, the sketch-in figures of the systematic rape of France by Nazi Germany brings its impact home simply and effectively.

While some might complain of the apparent tokenism of the sections on women in France which appear in each Chapter, these both reflect significant recent research and allow the exploration of key issues not picked up elsewhere. The same accusation might be levelled at the treatment of social and economic change, and yet there is a surprising amount of meat in these passages within a more general political narrative. It is against the remarkable ebb and flow of economic prosperity and the huge human capacity of the French land mass (and it is massive) that the story of people and their conflicts is told. The enthusiastic version provided here of the cultural flowering of the High Middle Ages takes on added meaning when juxtaposed with a similar account of economic prosperity. By 1320, the population of France had grown to around 20 million. At the same time, that of England was 3 million and of Italy 8 million.

Yet in some senses it is in this comparative dimension that I am most disappointed in this history. In his opening introduction, Professor Jones sets himself the task of writing a history which is alert to the complex character of "nationhood" and its many uses as a concept. He questions its common application to France, the most enduring cradle of contemporary nationhood, by drawing early attention to Regional, cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, religious, political and geographical variety within France. This intention whetted my appetite for an argument about the nation carried on through the narrative, but instead we are left with what is at the end, a fairly staid selection, focusing on metropolitan political continuity as the narrative theme.

The most striking feature of the early mediaeval period is why, of the three Frankish kingdoms, Burgundy/Lotharingia and Germany developed so differently politically from France. Yet, while we have here an interesting

narrative of how the Capetians and then the Valois manipulated kingly strengths to build up more and more authority and ultimately the first trappings of the nation state, that comparison with other parts of Europe which might have explored the "French" dimension is missing. As the narrative develops into the modern period, despite the author's original intention the message comes through that France was always there somewhere, and *had* to emerge in the way it did.

Perhaps this is inevitable in a work of this type: to title a history "France" is to focus on the emergence of national political institutions and frame the discussion of cultural, social and economic change around the geographical area which we now know as France. One could also argue that the conservative choice of treatment allows the reader to ask further questions him- or herself, on a firm footing of generally understood key events, dates and people. I was, however, expecting more. I was hoping for a national history which set the *nation* as a historical concept in a wider context, particularly as we move into the 21st Century backing a wider European ideal. Where better for an exploration of nationality than a history of France itself?

As a one-volume primer, as a work of easy reference, and as an easy browse, this work will be hard to beat. There is, however, by the end, a much clearer impression of some of the trees than of the wood itself.

DANIEL MURPHY

The Economic History of Britain since 1700 (3 Volumes, 2nd Edition)

Roderick Floud & Donald McCloskey

Cambridge £17.95 each vol. Vol. 1, 484pp; Vol. 2, 510pp; Vol. 3, 427pp. 1994

The first edition of this work appeared in 1981 and immediately established itself as an authoritative study. The new edition follows the same format of essays on important themes written by experts, but many of the writers are changed and the topics covered do sometimes differ from those analysed in 1981. The most significant change, however, is that the previous two volumes have been expanded into three: the years from 1939 to 1992 are now the subject of a separate volume, while Volume 1 runs from 1700 to 1860 and Volume 2 from 1860 to 1939.

As before, the strengths are obvious: the specialists provide up-to-date surveys of the issues raised in their area, and the bibliographies at the back of each volume are awesome in their range. The shifting interpretations of the dominant issues are usually clearly brought out.

Thus, the emphasis is now on the very gradual nature of economic change during the period of the 'Industrial Revolution' and the significance of many of the old causes so well known to generations of teachers and students is minimised: coal and cotton, although growing very fast, did not bulk large in the overall economy; technical innovations were not decisive; factories were less important than thought; foreign trade was marginal and transport developments contributed little. Economic growth began well before the 1780s and the really rapid pace of expansion did not occur until the 1830s. On the standard of living, the current orthodoxy is that, while there is no clear proof that conditions rose before 1820, over the next 30 years they did, with the rise in real wages very pronounced.

On the late Victorian economy, it appears that entrepreneurs have been less inadequate than thought and the role of the Empire in sustaining the British economy, while more important by 1913 than in 1870, was still not as great as previously believed. The rehabilitation of the inter-war economy continues, with emphasis on the failings of the 1920s being noted and the arguments for recovery in the 1930s, on balance upheld.

The work is not without defects, however: the third volume is less satisfactory, partly because most of the authors seem to be going over pretty much the same terrain (Britain's economic decline) and partly because jargon intrudes to a great degree. Throughout the volumes the sections on social history are rather disappointing in their narrow focus on living conditions, with the last volume especially displaying this. Remarkably, there is no treatment of the inter-war social conditions, a field of vigorous debate.

The book shows how far contemporary economic historians have moved from the confident positions of previous generations: this erosion of former certainties probably makes assimilating the new views and offering them to schoolchildren rather a daunting task. The work is probably too advanced for most students to use themselves, although CSYS candidates might relish grappling with the text.

IAN G. C. HUTCHISON

Before the Industrial Revolution, European Society and Economy 1000-1700 (3rd Ed)

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|-----------|--------|-------|------|---------------------|
| | | | | C M. Cipolla |
| Routledge | £12.99 | 333pp | 1993 | ISBN 0 415 09005 9 |

An Economic History of Medieval Europe (2nd Ed)

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|---------|--------|-------|------|---------------------|
| | | | | N J G Pounds |
| Longman | £16.99 | 536pp | 1994 | ISBN 0 582 21599 4 |

Professor Cipolla's book is an economic analysis of the period from 1000 to 1700 rather than an economic history. He begins by analysing what constituted demand in the Middle Ages and then moves on to consider the factors contributing to, and the different types of, production. Lots of examples, many very interesting indeed, are brought in to demonstrate the economic concepts he is describing. Demand, for instance, is divided into public demand relating to military matters, public feasts and the needs of administrations, and private demand, which centred very largely on food. The impact of socio-cultural factors on demand is discussed and illustrated by the continuing demand for wet-nurses by adults in the Middle Ages! Unfortunately, however, no reference is given for this example.

At the end of the first part of the book, one is left with a better understanding of what these concepts mean but because the examples are drawn from all over Europe and from different dates, this understanding is very general. One has no idea of the history of, for example, demand, and there are definitely exceptions to be made to some of the sweeping generalisations.

The second part of the book focuses on the major factors which led to the emergence of the modern age. This is traced through the reasons for the expansion from 1100-1300, for the crisis of 1300-1350, for the voyages of discovery and the effect of these discoveries on Europe. One of the key features of this development, according to Professor Cipolla, was the fact that because of high mortality, Europe was never swamped by over-population, as was Asia. When the population growth after 1700 was not stopped by Malthusian-style famine, technical and economic achievement rendered Europe able to cope. This thought-provoking book will not be directly relevant to teachers unless for some of the specific examples and tables. It is more valuable for the researcher wishing to change into economic gear and looking for models and concepts to apply to their work.

On the other hand, the second edition of Professor Pounds' *Economic History of Medieval Europe* could be of much greater use to teachers. It is a straightforward and clear account of the development of the medieval economy from 500 to 1500. The first three chapters and the last chapter give a chronological economic history of the Middle Ages and highlight the major trends and developments. Especially interesting is the chapter on the expansion and growth of the medieval economy from the ninth to the thirteenth century.

The thematic chapters cover population, agriculture, towns, manufacturing, trade and the commercial revolution which saw the appearance of bills of exchange and banking. In all these chapters the range of material presented is impressive, as is the geographical coverage of Europe. Obviously it is not possible for the author to cover everywhere and everything but the reader does not feel, as he did with Professor Cipolla's book, that there are glaring omissions. The coverage is comprehensive. The chapter on towns for instance, describes the emergence of towns generally and then looks in more detail at the Mediterranean, northwest Europe and central Europe. The size and function of towns are discussed with a map of towns of various sizes throughout Europe. Unfortunately Scotland is shown as having no town of over 2,000 people in the late medieval period, when Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dundee and Perth should all have been marked. This chapter also deals with urban finance and is well illustrated with plans and tables.

Interestingly, Professor Pounds tends to agree with Professor Cipolla that in the later Middle Ages there was not a general European depression, but that the amount of development or recession varied from region to region. Success in one area was paralleled with decline in another. While the period of growth had undoubtedly ended - the Black Death and Hundred Years War made sure of that - there is not enough evidence to say that there was a general depression throughout Europe, nor is there enough evidence to say that production fell farther than the fall in population warranted. What was happening was that there were changes, changes in the division of labour and changes in prosperity, with the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer.

Any teacher tackling Option (A) of the Revised Higher and wishing to find out about a particular aspect of the medieval economy or about general trends such as periods of growth or decline, or the effects of the Black Death; will find that Professor Pounds' book will be much more useful than Professor Cipolla's.

J M GILBERT

