

# THE SOCIAL CREDITER

## FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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### WHAT CRISIS?

It is highly unlikely that any Prime Minister of Great Britain could remain ignorant of the real world forces operating in the political and economic fields, and of the policies being pursued by those directing such forces. How then, it may be asked, can we account for the fact that Mrs Thatcher and Edward Heath, being thus aware, yet hold opposing views on most aspects of the political and economic issues of the day?

This point is made because it may give some hope in our present situation. It is often said that politicians will preach and do anything to gain and retain power. The "insider" knows the line to take and is left to do the explaining when results accrue which differ from his pre-election promises. This process is beneficial to the policy directors for it almost guarantees a short political life if the need for change is decided upon. The wrong party gets sacked!

C. H. Douglas wrote in *The Social Crediter* in February 1948: ". . . the practical problem we have to face is not intellectual, it is militant. Mere conversion to any understanding of the A + B Theorem, the creation of credit by the banks, and the whole network of International Finance *by itself* leads nowhere. Probably 90 per cent of the adult population of the country suspect that they are being swindled. Even if they understood exactly and technically *how* they are being swindled, it would make little difference. But it does make a great deal of difference if they know *who* is obstructing the rectification of the swindle, and who is the major beneficiary. The general population of the country has been completely misled as to the identity of its enemies and has turned on its most effective leaders. . . ."

Accepting the personal integrity of Mrs Thatcher and Edward Heath, we are forced to the conclusion that their differences, although they are of the same Party, derive from opposing philosophies. These philosophies seem to be respectively Christian and Judaic in origin — supremacy of the individual? Or of the group? — decentralisation? Or centralisation? There are many manifestations of such contrasts. Edward Heath remains a centraliser and by his career is clearly an "insider". Mrs Thatcher, if we read her utterances right, aims to free the individual and appears to oppose the centralisers and One-Worlders. Her party leadership and record term of office reflect both the nation's distrust of Socialism, national and international, and its growing patriotism and belief in itself.

Should Mrs Thatcher fail the nation, there may not be another chance and we fear this may be what is planned by the would-be World Government of International Finance. Failure is inevitable if the powers arrayed against her are under-estimated and the population is left to believe our situation to be fortuitous. Dr Bryan W. Monahan in *The Last Chance: a Conspectus 1960* wrote: "There are those who sincerely believe that World Government, even in the last resort by Communism, would be preferable to the threats and disorders of today. Such a view is defensible only on the hypothesis that our troubles are fortuitous, a

hypothesis which in the face of present evidence is no longer tenable. And in any case, 'no cause, no cure'. Our last chance lies in facing the fact that there is a ruthless bid for World Hegemony and in dealing with the conspirators. A conscious policy for World Hegemony for Finance is not in the least likely to be a benevolent plan for the peace and prosperity of the peoples of the world. . . ."

The secret ways by which World Hegemony is pursued must be revealed, without prejudice to race or religion. Truth must be set against secrecy and deception. The people will react to reality. For example, they should be told WHY "now, more than ever before, it is necessary for Israel to talk to the Palestinians or their representatives". Is it because the world is taking sides and the lines are being drawn? For whose benefit?

Edward Heath appears to know. In attacking the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget, he said that we were in a crisis and that the Chancellor did not know what to do. Does Mrs Thatcher see a crisis here and now, or even on the horizon, and will she disclose the true nature of that crisis? If she does, her proposals for a cure will receive the electors' support. If she does not, the exit door waits for her to pass. Has she the courage to demand results of the bankers and financiers? She is certainly entitled to require them to deliver or quit for she herself has gone strictly by their rule book — yet our ills continue, to her own detriment and ours too.

### THE CHALLENGE TO MRS THATCHER

Even a Government with a comfortable majority cannot escape the onset of "mid-term blues". Nagging doubts afflict the breasts of some of the Tory faithful about various contentious issues.

The proposed "opting-out" of hospitals from the N.H.S. and of schools from the jurisdiction of local authorities has stimulated fierce opposition from substantial sections of the medical, nursing and teaching professions. Water and electricity privatisations, not well understood or popular in the country, seem destined to generate more heat than light as they queue up for parliamentary scrutiny. Meanwhile, Labour closes in on the Tories in the opinion polls.

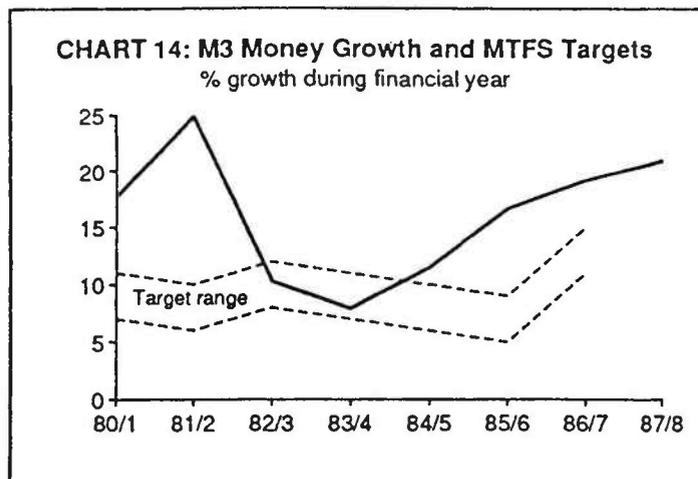
But most worrying of all for Mrs Thatcher, despite the brave face she habitually puts upon it, must be the spectre of inflation persisting and rising in spite of her Government's declared priority of "maintaining downward pressure" upon it. Particularly hard-hit by Nigel Lawson's insistence on a policy of high interest rates is a substantial part of the "property-owning democracy" the Tories claim for their own. Earlier gains from tax reliefs have been more than cancelled out by sharply increased mortgage payments and the rate of re-possession by lending institutions has risen accordingly. What if high interest rates do not work?

Lawson's high interest rate policy is condemned by Brian Reading in a monograph, "Mr Lawson's Boom", published

by the Economic Research Council.\* In a Foreword, the Chairman says: "Brian Reading's Monograph changes the perspective of the Chancellor's policy by pointing out that high interest rates are the problem, not the solution, of today's economic dilemma."

In his summary, Reading says: "There have been three Tory booms in the past 25 years: Reggie Maudling's, Tony Barber's and Nigel Lawson's. Both earlier booms ended in disaster for the economy and electoral defeat for the Conservatives. Will Lawson's boom end in grief?" Later he says: "Lawson's boom will be followed by Lawson's slump unless sterling and interest rates are lowered". He demonstrates very clearly not only how the Government have lost control over the crucial factor in the situation, the growth of money supply, but also the total divorce between the creation of money and the creation of real wealth.

"... In 1980 the Government adopted a Medium Term Financial Strategy designed by Nigel Lawson. . . . Under the M.T.F.S. the Treasury committed itself to a precise target range, looking several years ahead, for the progressive reduction in the growth in the money supply. Sterling M3 was the money stock measure originally chosen as the Government's target variable. At the same time the Government set a path for the reduction in its P.S.B.R. arguing that, although there was no precise connection between the growth in sterling M3 and the size of the P.S.B.R.<sup>1</sup>, the bigger the Government's deficit, the higher nominal interest rates needed to be to hit any given money growth target. It was therefore essential that the Government's deficit be reduced to manageable proportions so that money supply growth could be controlled with an acceptable level of interest rates.



"In the event, . . . the Government succeeded brilliantly in cutting the P.S.B.R., not only faster than originally planned, but to the extent of creating the present £10 bn. P.S.D.R." (now £14 bn. P.S.D.R.<sup>2</sup> — *Ed. T.S.C.*). But after some initial success, . . . the Government failed dismally to contain sterling M3 growth within its target range (see chart 14). It was finally forced to abandon this measure and target the better behaved but less relevant

narrow monetary aggregate, M0, in its place. The persistence of high nominal interest rates after 1985, despite the Government's success in eliminating its budget deficit, was in large measure due to futile efforts to check broad money supply growth. Unfortunately, high interest rates were the cause of fast money supply growth, not the cure. So the more the Government kept nominal rates up, the less success it had in bringing money growth down, and the more it was tempted to push interest rates higher.

"When exchange controls were removed in October 1979 the workings of the British monetary system were fundamentally changed. Hitherto the British money supply was contained in a separate box from the rest of the world's, with flows into and out of that box under control. Henceforth people in Britain were free to borrow and lend what they liked, however much they liked, in whatever currency they liked, anywhere in the world. Moreover, with the spread of international banking and improved communications, they are now able to do so easily, cheaply, speedily and knowledgeably. *Britain's national money supply, as a wholly separate entity, ceased to exist. Instead we now occupy a corner of the world's money supply and only inertia and friction gives the Government the ability to affect to any significant degree what happens in that corner* (Emphasis added — *Ed. T.S.C.*).

"The internationalism of Britain's money supply had consequences which the Government failed to foresee. Money used to be either plentiful-and-cheap or scarce-and-dear. Now it can also be plentiful-and-dear or scarce-and-cheap. When foreign investors have confidence in the British economy and sterling, as they had with abundance from 1986 onwards, unnecessarily high British interest rates encourage them to lend excessively to Britain and encourages Britons to borrow excessively abroad. A capital inflow results. The supply of money in the British corner of the world money system increases when the price of money in Britain rises. Money here becomes more plentiful when it is made dearer."

Under the sub-heading "He has no Alibi", Brian Reading concludes his monograph as follows: "No Chancellor has had fewer excuses for things going wrong. Nigel Lawson did not inherit an inflationary explosion. He has not had to steer Britain through a world recession. He has not been saddled with a fixed absurdly unrealistic exchange rate. Nor has he had to deal with a world commodity or oil price explosion. He has not even had to raise taxes. He has been a very lucky Chancellor. But consequently problems which have arisen for the British economy have been of his own making. He has nothing else and nobody else to blame. It is to be hoped that he can be brought to understand this. If the coming recession is to be mild, and the interruption to rapid growth brief, interest rates and sterling must both be brought down to more reasonable levels. . . . If he persists (in maintaining high interest rates — *Ed. T.S.C.*), then Mr Lawson's slump will inevitably follow Mr Lawson's boom, and Labour will have an unexpected third chance to win back power."

There are several points of interest in all this. The first is to note the fixation of economic commentators, of whatever school, with monetary indicators as the chief measure of economic performance. For them the question is not whether the economy is best serving the interests of consumers, but whether it can be managed so as to ensure

\* *Mr Lawson's Boom: a Monograph*, by Brian Reading, published by the Economic Research Council, 55 St James's Street, London, SW1A 1LA. Price £3.00.

<sup>1</sup> P.S.B.R. — Public Sector Borrowing Requirement.

<sup>2</sup> P.S.D.R. — Public Sector Debt Repayment.

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## DOUGLAS "FALLACIES" HISTORICALLY VINDICATED

The Winter 1988 number of *Britain and Overseas*, the Digest published by the Economic Research Council, printed an article over the initials "J. B." which reviewed a book entitled *Douglas Fallacies — A Critique of Social Credit* by Dr John Lewis, published by Chapman and Hall in 1935. We reprint below, with permission of the author, a reply to the article from the pen of Dr Geoffrey Dobbs.

Sir, I am intrigued to see that you can find room (Winter 1988 issue) for a 53-year old denunciation of C. H. Douglas and Social Credit which is little more than socialist propaganda. It is not surprising that Dr John Lewis's book showed no grasp at all of what Social Credit was about, since, in so far as Douglas dealt with economics he started at the other end from the money system, that is with the *real* economics of production, distribution and consumption, of which he, as an engineer, and most of his followers as practical men, but few economists or financiers, have experience.

From this viewpoint, everything is very properly seen upside down, and money comes into it only as an essential, but secondary, accountancy device for *enabling* what can be done, and what people as consumers want done, to be realised. This is the opposite of the accepted view of money as a means of control and manipulation of the economy, and the lives of most people with it. In the same way accepted economics seeks maximum employment of men, energy and resources with maximum growth of the economy and maximum export surplus, while Social Credit seeks to minimise all these to the full extent compatible with the efficient delivery of the required product to the satisfaction of all in their primary function as consumers, without which any "economic" action is pointless.

From the "orthodox" viewpoint, as quoted from Lewis (p. 27) "The difference between the total output and what is consumed is of course the nation's saving." In *real* economics that amounts to saying that the vast mountains of wasted and unwanted products constitute "savings", which as usual is the reverse of the truth as seen by social crediters. But facts in the real world are seldom allowed to penetrate into the economics of debt-control.

Over 60 years ago Douglas pointed out that "a continuous rise in the cost of living absolutely *must* take place" (roars of ridicule from the "orthodox"); that debt

must rise progressively and that economic war to "capture" markets and impose unemployment on other nations *must* result in military war. (Nonsense! Rubbish! from all the pundits.) That was in 1934. It is evident that he will never be forgiven for being right.

As for his crime in pointing out the obvious truism that there is a growing time-lag between incomes and prices which can be met only by debt, inflation, export surpluses, or bankruptcies, under present arrangements — all of which are socially traumatic — the only answer seems to be louder and more pejorative noises and the spreading of the idea that he wanted to "stimulate demand", which would be "inflationary" at a time like this when we are suffering from excess of consumer debt.

This in fact completely proves his point about the deficiency in *today's* (not tomorrow's mortgaged) purchasing power, though when he made the point "consumer credit" was virtually unknown. And just look at who is accusing Douglas of "inflationism" — the economists under whose advice the £ and \$ and most other currencies have denegated to about a fortieth of their value, and are devalued every year with the rate now being merely slightly varied by manipulating the rates of borrowing. And just how could it be inflationary for people to be able to buy what is produced out of income rather than mortgaging their future incomes at the current usurious rates of interest? Dare anyone now deny that, as Douglas said, price-inflation is a *built-in* property of the money system?

Ah well! I know after long experience that these arguments seldom make any impact on those who see economics in terms of money as the limiting and controlling factor. There is simply no contact, and their criticisms are like denunciations of the helicopter as an absurd motor car. The only critics who are on record as seeing Social Credit as what it really was were the Webbs, who said bluntly: "We don't like your objectives. Mr Douglas!" But as an ecologist (long before the "Greens") I keep hoping that some day reality will somehow break in before we have made this planet uninhabitable by a species that lives in a monetary world of the Never Never.

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### The Challenge to Mrs Thatcher

(Continued from page 2)

perpetual growth — for growth's sake. Truly, *Daemon est Deus inversus*. Ecologically, "growth" is costing the Earth.

Secondly, it is clear that pressure on Great Britain to join the European Monetary System is mounting. Lawson has categorically rejected the E.C. Commission's report advocating monetary union and a European central bank, but his position could be undermined by failure of his present policy on interest rates to control inflation and monetary growth.

For Mrs Thatcher, the crucial question is whether the continuing battle against inflation, and the risk of losing it while following orthodox advice, will open her eyes to the underlying reality that her greatest challenge — to make money the servant of government instead of its master — now finally confronts her.

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## ELECTIONS

JUNE 1989

TELL MRS THATCHER YOU  
WANT TO OPT OUT

**ABSTAIN!**

## THE SOCIAL CREDITER

### FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION . . . AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT

In his 65-page Introduction to the third (revised) Edition of his (1943) *Metternich 1773-1819 . . . A Study of his Period and Personality*, Algernon Cecil writes:

I must still insist that the comparative method of history offers the only method of getting our estimates of forms of government or the merits of statesmen even approximately correct. The "use of history", observes a sagacious writer (Abbott, *Thucydides*, p. 7.), "is to light the present hour to its duty". . . .

Let the student, then, shed all pre-disposition as he starts to survey the *ancien régime* or fixes his eye upon the figure of Metternich. Since this book was first published (1933) we have had time to consider a Europe "liberated" from the rule of priests and kings, and dominated by an Austrian house-painter, an Italian schoolmaster and a Georgian "kinto" from Tiflis. These are all in the descent, not hereditary but intellectual, from the Corsican adventurer, and much more truly sons of the people than he could claim to be. . . .

The wars of religion, so-called, were over; yet the student of the French Revolution will, to probe its depths and appraise its significance, find himself forced into the sphere of theological thought and Christian doctrine. "Our heart is restless until it rests in Thee," St Augustine had written in the last days of the Western Empire and on the eve of those Dark Ages which preceded the coronation of Charlemagne by the Pope and the rising again in Rome of an imperialism that was to be styled Holy as well as Roman, to endure to a year for a millenium, and, despite all the mockery that in its latter days its grand name provoked, to leave upon the soil of Europe the outline, misty and spectral, yet never completely blotted out, of a city or commonwealth of God.

The great phrase of Augustine not only sank deep into the mind of Christendom but stretches still, like a scroll spread out, across the horizon of the Middle Age, so that keen students of the period, as for instance Professor Powicke in his *Christian Life in the Middle Age* (p. 21), testify

constantly to the presence there of a rare sense of quietness, confidence and stability behind all the turmoil of the time. A beauty, not of this world, breaks through, shedding its restful radiance over the whole field of thought and urging men to recognise that to act rightly one must first think truly, and that to think truly one must first seek to put oneself in a state of grace.

Between this singular light, which, as some might be found to declare, "never was on sea or land", and the eyes of Humanity the Revolution interposed itself; and, in the confusion that followed, restlessness of mind in respect to all things in heaven and earth increased and multiplied. The Revolution, indeed, at the beginning was still content to provide mankind with some sort of a deity — with a Supreme Being conceived in the style of the 18th century as arguable, remote, and frigid. So arguable that in France, even when the Revolution was well on its way, he cannot be said to have been disproved to the satisfaction of the finer intelligences; so remote, that in Russia he has lately become lost in the snows; so frigid that, neither in France nor in Russia nor anywhere else, could such a Being, however arguably supreme, be loved by anyone in his right senses! Such was the Revolution's God. Its goddess was Reason — Reason impersonated at her inaugural feast by a prostitute. One can hardly be surprised that within a time religion was declared by some revolutionists to have been no more than an opiate by which the masses of the people were drugged into dull repose.

It was in these circumstances that tranquillity, which is as much a condition of wise politics as of great art, was largely lost to Christendom. Emotion must always be latent, if not patent, in finished statesmanship, for without some movement of sympathy or antipathy who dare hope to govern a world of pain? But it needs for the best results to be emotion recollected in tranquillity, reconsidered in marmoreal calm, and recalling, like sculpture itself, the thought of frozen music. Reduce it to the mere notion of sympathy for the under-dog, and society becomes, as the Revolution has given the world only too much occasion to remark, no better than a dog-fight.

The history of France in the 19th century, and so far in our own, has, if we interrogate it, been one long search to find a cure for this passion of unrest. Every remedy that politics suggests has been tried in turn, and in turn found wanting. Every doctor has been called in, and in turn dismissed. Neither the great administrative genius of Napoleon, nor the genial good-nature of Henri Quatre, invoked if not recalled by the restoration of the Bourbons; neither the philosophy of Guizot nor the poetry of Lamartine, neither the autocratic nor the Liberal imperialism of Napoleon III; neither the clericalism of the Second Empire nor the anti-clericalism of the Third Republic; neither the nationalism of Poincaré nor the socialism of Blum have availed anything. The Revolution far from producing the regeneration that "progressive" publicists have grown into the habit of assuming, has been the precursor of a mortal malady with many complications — of a declining birth-rate, of a distracted and discredited Chamber, and at last of a moral *débâcle*, beside which the "Débâcle" of which Zola wrote was as nothing. That was a true voice which cried "La France se meurt; ne troublez pas son agonie".

The following from the December 1988 EDITORIAL  
(*The Salisbury Review*) introduces the article

### THE PRICE OF REVOLUTION\*

by A. L. Rowse

Next year sees the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution, and, in anticipation of the hypocritical festivities which will be staged in all the territories of Europe, we carry an article by A. L. Rowse, deliberating on the findings of René Sedillot — findings which would be common knowledge were it not for 200 years of historiographical mendacity. The fact is that the Revolution was a disaster as great as any in the history of our civilisation, and one that provided the model and the inspiration, for the disasters that were to come. In 1789, as in 1917 and 1933, a diabolical force took possession of men's souls, sweeping all before it, and mobilising the religious passions of its victims towards the end of their own destruction. The Revolution placed its gods upon earth, and described them in "the language of man": liberty, equality and fraternity. And these idols thenceforth remained upon their papier-mâché thrones. Yet what do they amount to? The pursuit of them was to destroy every imperfect human value — freedom, justice and fellowship — which they might otherwise have sanctified. Moreover, they were to threaten, not only the religious and moral, but also the aesthetic values of our civilisation, conscripting people behind one of the greatest acts of organised vandalism in the history of mankind. These abstractions stepped down into the world of men from the sphere of metaphysics and laid waste the patient work of centuries, finding nothing in the merely empirical world that could match their own geometrical perfection. At the same time, the Revolutionaries began to adore their idols, not in spite of, but because of the fact that they inspired the world with terror. "Liberty," since it denoted no achievable goal, came to refer to the purely *negative* principle, that all powers on earth are powers of usurpation, and could therefore be destroyed. Likewise, "equality" referred to no achievable order: it meant neither justice, nor law, nor that "respect for persons" which was set before us by Kant. It too had a negative application: it was a weapon against privilege, a denial of distinction, and an inspiration to the eye and hand of envy.

Worst of the idols, however, was the third: fraternity. This most potent of abstractions has been the source of socialist dreams from the Revolution to the present day. The General Will of Rousseau, the People of Robespierre, the "phalanstery" of Fourier, the commune of Marx, the *fascio* of the Italian anarchists, the *groupe en fusion* of Sartre: all express the same contradictory idea, of a free society without institutions, in which people spontaneously group together in life-affirming globules, and from which the dead shell of law, procedure, custom and authority has fallen away. The aim is for a "society without obedience", indeed, for a "unity in disobedience", where conflict, competition, domination and subservience are all unknown. . . .

As with Robespierre's *peuple*, which cannot be the object of compassion, and at the same time sovereign, and without the need for a condescending love, so too with the industrial worker.

The proletariat of the Leninist must mirror the striving individualism of the alienated intellectual; but at the same

time he must display the complete social immersion, the "class solidarity", from which the intellectual feels himself so tragically sundered. The worker of the future, like the "People" of Robespierre, must be completely free, and at the same time bound by the consoling solidarity of the oppressed. The contradictory nature of the idol is the immediate result of its having stepped from the transcendental into the empirical realm. And yet the idol is worshipped as such, in full consciousness of its impossibility. As with the Revolutionists, the *real* reference to the transcendental, which is there in the humble forms of ordinary love, is cancelled, on behalf of an earthly idol whose sole reality is to destroy human relations, by measuring them against a standard which they cannot attain.

We are confronted by an astonishing fact — one that we should treat with all due solemnity since it touches on the meaning of our lives. Liberty, equality and fraternity become the objects of religious zeal only to destroy freedom, justice and fellowship. Their earthly reality is precisely Nothing, and the spirit of nihilism blows through them with a force that is all the more mysterious in that we the worshippers provide it.

### THE PRICE OF REVOLUTION\*

by A. L. Rowse

The French Revolution ushered in the modern world, such as it is, and set the example for the revolutions that succeeded it in France, Europe and the outer world in the 19th century. Our own more murderous century has provided more horrible examples, with genocide and other accompaniments. Sainte Beuve described the French as "the most horrible modern revolution". In France it has always been the subject of fierce partisanship: approved by most people on the Left, disapproved by the Right. It has been difficult to get a balanced objective view, estimating the losses as well as the gains.

At last a book has appeared which gives one the *bilan* of the whole affair, *Le Coût de la Révolution française* by René Sédillot (Perrin, 95 francs). It gives one the facts and the figures. We have all been taught that the peasants got the land, and that this was a great benefit. But how much did they get, and what was the result; how far did France profit from it? We shall see.

The author of this original and salutary book takes the whole period of Revolution and Napoleon, 1789-1815, as one. After all, Napoleon was the child of the Revolution, inherited its aggressive, expansionist spirit and carried it to its furthest bounds — to Moscow indeed. From the first the Revolution was aggressive: an early revolutionary urged that "war is a benefit to the nation, peace a calamity". Thus the occupation of Belgium and the Scheldt forced the reluctant Pitt into war, against his instincts and his gifts (unlike his father he was not good at waging war; he took after his mother's family, the Grenvilles, and was better as a peacetime administrator).

The upshot of the wars, external and internal, civil war and massacres, was about two million French dead. Something like 400,000 perished in the prolonged civil war in La Vendée and Lower Brittany — the former province

\* Reprinted with permission from *The Salisbury Review*, December 1988.

was deliberately ravaged and left desolate. The infamous Carrier was responsible for some 1,800 deaths at Nantes: 800 by the *noyades*, throwing boatloads into the Loire — a couple tied together formed a “*marriage républicain*” — the rest shot in batches, in regular *battues*. At Angers 800 were massacred, bodies thrown into the Loire. At Lyons the massacres were presided over by the unspeakable Couthon. Then there were the notorious massacres in Paris, which made history, and the continual operation of the guillotine.

All lives are not equally valuable, and among those guillotined were France's greatest scientist, Lavoisier; her best poet at the time, André Chénier; her leading intellectual, Condorcet, fell a victim, though not by guillotine. Lavoisier was the discoverer of oxygen, and in addition to other discoveries, was making important applications of chemistry to agriculture, of great benefit to France, which the guillotine prevented him from completing. “The Republic has no need of *savants*” (scientists), proclaimed a revolutionary. One is reminded of the way in which Nazi Germany got rid of indispensable Jewish scientists. As for Condorcet, with his inhuman progress, not even his experience in contradiction of it shook his naive optimism. Nor did it Tom Paine's, who defended the Revolution to the English-speaking world — and escaped the guillotine only by flying from France. She lost other scientists in the wake of Lavoisier, as well as artists and writers who sensibly fled the country, like Châteaubriand. The emigration numbered some 70,000. Not all of these were losses; the Comte d'Artois, for example, who as Charles X showed himself another James II, was no loss. Nor was the abominable duc d'Orléans, Philippe Egalité, who financed revolutionary agitation, voted for the execution of poor Louis XVI, his cousin, then was himself guillotined.

Demographically, M. Sédillot tells us that France in 1789 was over-populated. It is borne home to an historian that, consciously or unconsciously, excess population is at the bottom of many of the world's troubles, and in this century for the wars of aggression of Germany and Japan: in those cases consciously, with Hitler's demand for *Lebensraum* and Japan's “Co-Prosperity Sphere” in Asia. The result of France overstraining herself with wars all over the Continent was to reduce her population-growth during the period to 9 per cent, while Great Britain forged ahead to 23 per cent.

In 1789 the nobility were owners of one-fifth of the land — one does not know how much was leased out to others' profit. The Church owned rather less. This leaves perhaps 70 per cent already in the hands of *bourgeois* and peasants. The actual transfer of land amounted to perhaps one-fifth. The result of the expropriations of nobles, the Church and the émigrés, with the division of large estates, was to increase the number of small proprietors. But did this increase agricultural production or the productivity from the soil? Apparently not: we gather that agriculture “stagnated”; peasants' cultivation was very conservative — they did not take to growing potatoes, for example, or the optimum rotation of crops. Meanwhile in Britain the agricultural revolution — enclosures and widespreading crop rotation — immensely increased production from the land to feed the growing population.

M. Sédillot says forthrightly that the agricultural and industrial revolutions were the only ones worthwhile; Britain had the benefit of both and forged ahead.

War, the blockade and Napoleon's “Continental System”, attempting ineffectively to close the Continent to British trade, strangled French commerce, impeded France's industrial development and distorted what there was of it. In 1789 France's maritime traffic accounted for some 2,000 ships; in 1812 it was down to 179. The principal ports that had prospered before 1789 — Bordeaux, where one sees it visibly reflected in the splendid architecture of Louis XV's reign, Nantes, La Rochelle, Marseilles — all languished. France had been the principal supplier of Spain and through Cadiz of Spanish America. All now cut off: “*tout s'écroule*”.

But revolutionaries *pur sang* were antipathetic to trade and commerce anyway. The intolerable Saint Just declared that “a nation of tradesmen and merchants was not a nation, but just a fair of dealers and vagabonds”. Behind this was the impulse of the true revolutionary, to reduce everybody to mere equal units *vis-à-vis* the state (as one sees with Lenin and Soviet Russia). Everybody observed that the real mania in France was not for liberty, but for equality: that was the driving force (in other words, the envy of the inferior for the superior). But the depreciation of commerce is continuous with Napoleon's dismissal of Britain as a nation of shopkeepers. And how France paid for it!

We learn that in 1800 — half-way through the experience — industrial production was only 60 per cent of what it had been in 1789. In the next 10 years it picked up considerably, though mainly in the fields of armaments for Napoleon's wars, and in textiles for clothing his immense armies. And what did they achieve that was permanent? M. Sédillot calculates that in industrial development 30 years were lost, and in technical progress perhaps 40. Meanwhile Britain went ahead to the age of steam power, foreshadowing the age of railways in which she had a lead for the whole century.

He concludes that Napoleon's reply to the blockade, his “Continental System”, was ineffective, full of loopholes. The Emperor was reduced to allowing licences for imports necessary to keep his armies going. His brother Louis was driven to protest on behalf of Holland and left gaps wide open there for British imports. The author does not enforce the point that it was the Continental System more than anything that aroused popular and national feelings against French revolutionary imperialism all over Europe. It was the vain attempt to force Russia to adhere to it that led Napoleon to the disaster of 1812. He was pursuing a chimera, like Hitler in his onslaught on Russia.

Of all this England was the chief beneficiary. Naval power enabled her to hold out and to hold on throughout the *épopée* 1789-1815, to render all the victories of Revolution and Empire ultimately null. M. Sédillot calculates that eleven-twelfths of the world's shipping were at the disposal of the island power — and how right the British governing class were to stake everything on it, from La Hogue to Trafalgar! French shipbuilding was of a high quality before 1789, but the Revolution decimated the naval officer class. The upshot was that all the French possessions in the outside world were mopped up, from India to the West Indies, and Napoleon decided to sell Louisiana to the United States as no longer holding any promise for France.

Thus the territorial *bilan* shows a few minimal gains — Papal Avignon, which could have been occupied at any time, and a few places on the north-eastern frontier — but

the position in the outer world was irretrievably lost. Napoleon could win battles on land, but he could not win Trafalgar. How in these circumstances did he manage? His armies lived off the conquered countries — as Hitler's did from 1940-45. This ultimately set all the victims of their aggression against them, and enabled Britain to form the coalitions, the grand alliances, that brought them down. Moreover, though M. Sédillot does not make this point, it made Britain's stand morally right — expressed nobly in Pitt's war-speeches (as in Churchill's in our time).

Louis XVI's government had been bankrupted by the American war — it cost some 2 milliards of *livres*. Vergennes should never have gone to the aid of Britain's revolting colonies, but, the disciple of Choiseul, he could not resist the chance of revenge for the loss of Canada. If he had resisted that the American war would have dragged on even longer, exhausting Britain even more than it did.

The bankruptcy of the state started off the Revolution. Throughout most of the 18th century France had enjoyed stability of the currency. The Revolution, with the uncontrolled printing of paper money, the *assignats*, opened the floodgates — uncontrolled inflation, devaluation of the currency, with appalling consequences to social stability and the social fabric, undermining it to the enrichment of some, the impoverishment of many. The dreadful Marat, who was not without commonsense, questioned what was the point of getting rid of the aristocracy of the nobility to replace it by an aristocracy of the rich?

Some people made enormous fortunes, like the financier Ouvrard, or the finagling Talleyrand and Fouché. And of course corruption ran rife throughout such a debased society — as we see now brought into the light of day in Gorbachev's Russia. Talleyrand and Fouché became millionaires out of politics. M. Sédillot concludes that in such a society the rich became richer, the poor poorer. Hence the agitation on the extreme Left for communism with the propaganda and conspiracy of Baboeuf. This was not to the mind of the bourgeoisie for whose benefit the Revolution was made; he was given his come-uppance by the guillotine — to be made a martyr in subsequent communist and Marxist tradition.

The people at large were bemused by the mania for Equality, as the revolutionary refrain had it:

*Tout à la même hauteur —  
Voilà le vrai bonheur.*

In the name of equality specialist corporations were abolished. This had its ridiculous side, when it came to medicine, as Marat, who had been a doctor, saw. What was the point of allowing every unlicensed charlatan to set up as a doctor, he asked — and the Revolution had to go back on this piece of doctrinaire nonsense, as in some other respects. Before 1789 education was in the hands of the Church, to which many of the intellectuals of the Enlightenment who helped to create the Revolution — Diderot, for instance — owed their education (as Stalin, and Goebbels too, owed theirs). But the Revolution persecuted the church, closed churches, turned them over to secular uses (where have we seen those enlightened measures in our time?), and suppressed the teaching Orders. Result, so far as literacy was concerned: in 1789 some 37 per cent could at least sign their names, by 1830 the proportion had diminished to 33 per cent.

Culturally — and this is what interests most anyone who

cares for the arts — the Revolution was disastrous. M. Sédillot says that neither the Terror nor Napoleon was favourable to genius. Sainte Beuve regards the cardinal writers on the Revolution to be Burke (I agree, certainly not Tom Paine), Mme de Stael, Rivarol and Mallet du Pan. I am not a great admirer of Necker's daughter, Mme de Stael, but politically she was a sensible woman, who stood for a moderate constitutional monarchy *à l'Anglaise*. That would of course have been the best solution, as Mirabeau argued. Mallet du Pan, the Swiss observer whose writings on the Revolution, on its outrageous course, offer the best commentary on it, also held that the English model of constitutional monarchy was the best solution. He was driven into exile; Rivarol and Châteaubriand were émigrés — as of course were right-wingers like de Bonald in Germany and de Maistre in St Petersburg.

As for Mme de Stael, Napoleon would not allow her in the country with her liberal ideas. One can understand his attitude, for had not the Revolution been prepared, society undermined, by a lot of writers, ideologues and doctrinaires? Mallet du Pan applied the word of the philosophic, sceptical Montaigne to them: "*L'écrivainerie est le symptôme d'un siècle débordé*". We may translate this as "Scribbling is the symptom of a century out of hand". Has not that been the characteristic of the Left intellectuals of our time — the silly Sartres and irresponsible Bertrand Russells — as of the Marxism and Russian intellectualism that culminated in Lenin?

This is not to subscribe to the right wing line of the émigrés. They were a hopeless lot; as Mallet du Pan complained, the Bourbon princes never understood what had hit them, or anything of the case for the Revolution. Of course, political and social changes were necessary; in many ways they were already on the way under Louis XVI, as under Nicholas II in Russia.<sup>1</sup> The sad thing in human history is that desirable reforms, it often seems, cannot be carried out without appalling bloodshed. One cannot but think that France would have been happier without the Revolution; and think of the prodigious progress Russia would have made if it had not been for the war of 1914 and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917! France began to recover only after 1815 — M. Sédillot concludes 35 years lost. Similarly, as Mr Gorbachev is finding, with Russia.

Simply on the constitutional plane, a moderate monarchy, in keeping with popular consensus, would have given France some institutional stability, instead of the continual chops and changes of the 19th century. Lamartine complained that, when only half-way through life, he had lived under 10 régimes. Nor has the record in this century been any more stable. It took Louis XVIII the whole experience of 1789-1815 to learn the lesson of compromise, the necessity of consensus; and then his brother Charles X, who had learned nothing and forgotten nothing, forfeited it all by 1830. Perhaps the July Monarchy of Louis Philippe would have been France's best bet: it might have provided at least constitutional continuity.

The artistic destruction wrought by revolutions passes belief, yet historians rarely notice it, for they have little aesthetic or visual sense. The Puritan Revolution in England did untold damage, yet in all the outpouring of books on our Civil War no notice is taken of this aspect of things for, Philistine and uncultivated, they do not care for it.<sup>2</sup> M. Sédillot has more artistic sense, he has a section on the

subject which could well be longer — in fact the French have a whole book devoted to the subject, Louis Réau: *Monuments détruits de l'art français*.

Of cathedrals that of Boulogne was destroyed, and, I add, Avranches. Nôtre Dame in Paris narrowly escaped, with the loss of much of its splendid 13th century sculpture and its spires. The destruction of its famous gallery of kings was specially decreed, as of course royal statues were overthrown throughout the country. At Strasbourg the mayor invited anyone capable of wielding a hammer along; result: 231 statues and sculptures were lost from the cathedral. That kind of thing went on all over France (as indeed it had all over Britain during the Reformation and again with Puritan vandals).

Cluny, the greatest monastic monument of the Middle Ages — during which it had exerted an unequalled influence throughout Europe — was raised to the ground, along with many other abbeys and monastic buildings too numerous to mention. The bells of all the churches were sacrificed to make cannon. Scores, if not hundreds, of châteaux were destroyed or vandalised; among secular buildings Louis XIV's splendid palace of Marly, Francis I's Château de Madrid, Meudon of the Grand Dauphin; the Condés' Chantilly which we see today is a 19th century reconstruction. Though M. Sédillot does not mention them, the villas of the Pompadour and du Barry were destroyed, as was St Cyr of virtuous Mme de Maintenon, her tomb there vandalised, her ashes thrown out.

Too sickening to go through the tale of churches destroyed — we learn succinctly that Paris lost 18, Beauvais 12, Arras 7, Châlons 7, Troyes about 15, and so on, besides indiscriminate damage to attendant buildings, cloisters, etc., like those of St Germain-des-Près. Royal palaces were casually sacked until sales of their marvellous contents were organised and went on all through the period. In the whole history of taste that of the French 18th century has never been surpassed; the spoils of the Revolution went all over Europe. Here too Britain was a great gainer: it was fortunate that the Regent was an aesthete, a man of taste, and that he led the aristocracy in acquiring the marvels of French furniture and *objets d'art* to be seen at Windsor, Buckingham Palace, and our great houses (what is left of them).

There was besides much deliberate destruction. At Fontainebleau Philippe de Champaigne's portrait of Louis XIII — comparable with his splendid Richelieu, which we all know — was burned. It was rather a near thing that the artists themselves were not. David played up to the Revolution, but narrowly escaped the guillotine all the same. Fragonard and Mme Vigée-Lebrun, who had often portrayed Marie Antoinette in happier days, left the country. So too Riesener, greatest of *ébénistes* (cabinet makers), after the confiscation of his goods and the sacking of his workshops. (One thinks of the ending of the Fabergé workshops in St Petersburg.) Other artists and scientists — one or two of whom committed suicide — followed suit. A contemporary term for what happened would be: "Brain-drain". M. Sédillot sums it up in the thought that revolution terrorises *élites*.

Impossible to account for all the losses of other works of luxury and beauty — all the tapestries, the exquisite jewels, in particular the Crown jewels, or such subjects as Madame du Barry's gold toilet service (buried for safety; to recover it

she returned from the security of England to France and the guillotine). Then there were the losses to works catering for luxury, Gobelins tapestries and Sèvres porcelain, the printers of wonderful books, like Oudry's *La Fontaine* — under royal and aristocratic patronage, and where French taste led Europe. For, one must remember that taste, even more than common intelligence, is the real, and rarer, touchstone of culture.

Perhaps what touches the historian more is the destruction of archives and documents from hundreds of châteaux — bonfires were made of them — as well as from the libraries of monasteries, churches, royal palaces, aristocratic houses. (Mme de Pompadour had been a patron of beautiful books as well as everything else, silks, clothes, furniture, painting, and of course painters and writers.)

The author does not analyse the motives for all this destruction. There is, of course, the fundamental Philistinism, the instinct towards vandalism, among the masses, which we see at large in the indisciplined society of today. (Look at the picture made by our schools, now that punishment has ended, with teachers being beaten up by youths out of hand.) In all this there is a large amount of envy. It is curious that historians, in whose profession there is so much of it, do not realise what a force envy is all through history.

What standards are we to apply to this major event, out of which has come so much that it is to be deplored in modern society? In so far as over-population was, and is, a propelling force, the humane remedy is birth control, not massacres and war, internal or external. The standard that ultimately applies in history is not a demotic one, least of all an egalitarian one. We do not remember 5th century Athens for the teeming population at the Piraeus, its lack of sanitation and the presence of plague; nor do we remember Renaissance Florence for its internal faction-fighting or Rome for its malaria; we remember them for Leonardo and Lorenzo de Medici, for Raphael and Michelangelo and Palestrina. It is works of art and intellect that redeem man from the slime.

M. Sédillot is not an aesthete among historians such as Burckhardt. And he sees the period 1789-1815 as essentially a confrontation between France and Britain, overlooking the others who were roused to hostility by the French Revolution. (Prussia in particular took an almighty revenge in 1870-71.) He concludes by saying that the Revolution gave a grand display of pyrotechnics to the world, and left a legacy of "glory" and "prestige" to France. But what are they worth?

For France the Revolution was a "cruel experience", but certainly it was a good thing for Britain.

<sup>1</sup> See for this Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801-1917*, cc. XVII, XVIII.

<sup>2</sup> I have done my best to call attention to it in *Reflections on the Puritan Revolution* (1984) but so far to little effect.