

Don't expect a tutor to stay moping in a tourist town:  
 Bright at the receiver you will only hear the dialling tone.  
 If you're passing through yourself, perhaps to bring me back some books  
 (Quantities I lent you: won't you need to put them in a box?)  
 Don't imagine I'll be waiting, kettle steaming, on the hour.  
*Did* you call? I'm sorry! I'm afraid that's just the way things are.  
 Was my room locked and the tap not dripping, friendly, on the stair?  
 Did the scout look blank and turn away and give her tea a stir?  
 Did you interrupt the Lodge's cricket, stamp and tear your hair?  
 Hearing Strutt recite his lesson: "Mr Fuller is not here,  
 Having taken up a new appointment as the top masseur  
 (Being handy, tender, ready, when the nape and hips are sore)  
 With the Russian women's swimming, pole-vault and gymnastic teams,  
 Keen, you see, on sport and travel when he isn't keeping terms.  
 Leave a message with the porter? Always happy to oblige.  
 Got a packet for him, have you? Hope it isn't very large.  
 Look, his pigeon-hole is full already: invitations, cheques,  
 Magazines and scented envelopes as soft as ladies' cheeks.  
 Come back in October (what's the phrase?—"the sere and yellow leaf").  
 Michaelmas, I'm sure, will see us all resuming normal life."  
 Life! Ah, life, who always lives us so intensely at his will;  
 Life in lying chapters, promising that things will soon be well;  
 Life, who understands us all but keeps the secret in his book;  
 Life, the truest friend—who, once he goes away, will not come back.

## Ships in Bottles

You've seen paper when it's burnt  
 And turned to ash, yet keeps its shape,  
 How fine it is? Well the sails  
 Were like that, and the rigging  
 Something spiders might have spun,  
 Royals from fore to mizzen,  
 Delicacy and precision overall;  
 But a touch of fury too  
 Where the painted figure-heads  
 Fought through the foam.  
 And their maker?  
 No salty tar sitting on the quay  
 With the tops of his sea-boots rolled.  
 No, he kept bees; grew begonias;  
 Lived alone; and never complained.  
 Why then these vessels—bottled wanderers  
 Bobbing on a sideboard sea?  
 Uncorked—might a bright sprite pop out  
 To meet all wishes, or would it  
 Be some gaunt Ahab—black  
 From the scorch of hell—  
 Cursing the storms that howled inside?

*Neil Curry*

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## Politics & World Affairs

### The Coming of Leviathan

Human Rights—By FERDINAND MOUNT

IT WAS NOT Jimmy Carter who started it. That much is evident and widely remarked on. The current interest in human rights dates back a great deal further—in the first instance to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and hence to the Second World War and the massacre of the Jews. We can go back further again, although the lineage is fainter, to the League of Nations and the horrors of the First World War; the existence of refugees and stateless persons and the creation of fresh nation-states and their fresh anomalies and freshly aggrieved national minorities, together with the new technologies of torture and genocide available to civil and military authorities, have also posed problems of international law and justice. For practical politics, the question of human rights looks like a characteristically 20th-century question.

But why should this question have taken on such particular *intensity* in the last third of the century? Out of a crop of recently published books on political topics, it seems that nearly one in three is concerned in some way with human rights or the connected topics of human rights and duties, civil liberties, intervention and the limits of the nation-state. What is it about our own years that has brought this question increasingly to the forefront of political argument?

Clearly the answer must have something to do with the nation-state itself, for it is the nation-state, with its sharply defined boundaries and its large claims on the lives and loyalties of its citizens, which is the characteristic political feature of our times. Indeed we find it hard to conceive of politics except in terms either of bruising exchanges *between* these touchy, ill-tempered, suspicious Leviathans or of the *internal* workings of their constipated, hypertense bodies.

It is we who have also witnessed the decline and, in recent years, the final extinction of empire. More precisely, the *kind* of empire that has been declining and falling has progressively changed; from the Austro-Hungarian through the British and French, to the quasi-empire of the Americans, there is a

clear gradation from the relaxed to the tense, from the unorganised to the governmentalised. In considering the principal survivor, the Soviet empire, we ought to notice how few of the features of 19th-century empires it exhibits and how much more in its bureaucratic reach it has come to resemble the modern nation-state. In general, 19th-century empires were different; like 19th-century novels, they were “loose, baggy monsters”, often illogical in structure, blurred at the edges, essentially *permeable*; their boundaries were easily passable, their notions of citizenship sloppy and welcoming. If you were unjustly treated in a province or colony, you might be able to flee or, with luck, even to appeal to the central authority, or you might be dead and buried and never heard of in the metropolis. Injustice was either remediable or fatally obscure. It was not blatant and problematic. The modern nation-state’s combination of instant communications and barbed-wire boundaries presents a *frustration*; highly visible, intolerable injustices may be committed the other side of a wall which is transparent but impassable. We are in the situation of a Hitchcock hero: confined to a wheelchair watching a murder being committed the other side of the street.

The campaigner for human rights in a foreign country is attempting to “get at” the foreign nation-state, to break through its shell of independence and untrammelled sovereignty. Such campaigns naturally do not originate with official bodies or governments, for one’s own government, to start with at any rate, cannot help having much the same distaste for breaches of national sovereignty as the government of the nation-state which is complained of. The pressure characteristically comes from private bodies or individuals and is mediated either by their elected representatives or by non-governmental bodies set up for the purpose; the Jackson-Vanik amendment is an example of the first, the growth of Amnesty International an example of the second. The overnight success of some of these campaigns is startling. How was it that the US Congress was so quickly pressurised