

(though, granted, feel better informed about it). Just to take a personal example as a journalist; from time to time, young men arrive at my office with long lists of people who have been imprisoned, tortured and murdered in the post-Shah revolution—some 40,000 names, I believe, have been collected—and then the other day a young man came with another list, 2,000 names long, of the torturers themselves. . . . What a ghastly catalogue, and how hopeless the ordinary citizen must feel in the face of such enormities, even if in the nature of things there is no way of telling how true they are.

What is one to make of it all? Surely a little more than Mr Hiro's bland comment that the régime has taken actions which have lost it much of the goodwill it enjoyed abroad in the early days, and that whatever the true figure of executions, such actions by the Islamic Republic have "damaged its image." Quite so. There is a wealth of detail in his account and much good reporting, which is always refreshing, rather than historical judgments. He is broadly sympathetic to the Islamic revolution, which as he says is still going on. The most vivid image of the process comes from Dr Bakhash. On the day the Shah fled the country, he found himself surrounded by euphoric crowds in the streets.

"From opposite ends of a side street, two cars, each packed with celebrants, came at great speed towards the crossing. The driver of the first car was driving on his extreme right; the driver of the second car on his extreme left. The predictable happened . . . an ironic foretaste of the many collisions that lay ahead."

With his fluency in the language, Dr Bakhash gives a sense of inwardness in writing about the policies and personalities of the régime, and is particularly revealing about Ayatollah Khomeini.

Iran's success or failure is bound to affect other Islamic experiments. Both these books look at the situation that may arise when Khomeini goes. Whatever happens, it is evident that the clergy will continue to play a dominant role.

FOR ANOTHER VIEW, and a very entertaining one, of the

⁴ *The Pride and The Fall: Iran 1974-1979*. By ANTHONY PARSONS. Jonathan Cape, £8.95.

⁵ *The Persians Amongst the English: Episodes in Anglo-Persian History*. By DENIS WRIGHT. I. B. Tauris, £17.95, \$29.50.

events that determined the Shah's fall, one may turn to Anthony Parsons' *The Pride and the Fall*.⁴ How agreeable it must have been for the Shah, cosseted by flatterers and courtiers, to be able to converse on a regular basis, and apparently so frankly, with the British Ambassador. Unfortunately for the Shah, while he much enjoyed ranging over the expanse of foreign affairs, he would never discuss internal Iranian affairs with the Ambassador until it was too late. Sir Anthony spends much time in his account agonising over whether he should have foreseen the whole thing, and if so, whether British policy should have been pursued in a different way. He is fairly hard on himself. What one can say is that British exports to Iran, which when you get down to it were the basis of our concern, show every sign of picking up under the new management. (Persian travellers and diplomats have long taken an interest in England, as another Ambassador, Sir Denis Wright, demonstrates in an anecdotal historical survey, *The Persians Amongst the English*,⁵ containing much new material.)

The Shah's chief blind spot was that he took no interest in the Islamic law and culture which not only permeated but to a large extent controlled the life of his country. But, one might suggest, the Islamic experience as a whole has a blind spot, and that is its intolerance towards the West, towards other cultural experiences. This may not have always been so throughout historical times, but mistrust and distemper seem very prevalent in Iran today. Such attitudes are born of a superiority complex, yet it is clear that the Islamic renaissance, from an economic point of view certainly, has passed its peak.

"In retrospect", observes Daniel Pipes, summing up the effect of the great oil boom:

"the revival will appear as a curious aberration. Just as the power of a commodity price-setting organisation (OPEC) defied long-term trends, so the concomitant resurgence of Islam was fortuitous and transient. Islam's revival was inappropriate because it resulted in such large part from freak circumstances, not Muslim achievements; the unearned nature of the oil wealth cannot be ignored. Buoyed by unexpected good fortune, Muslims allowed themselves to imagine that they had solved their basic problem, the inability to come to terms with the West."

A State Department view? Or a large measure of truth? Iran's moral influence may be indeed fated to end—but at what cost is still to be reckoned.

DISCUSSION

The Far-Away Falklands

By Edward Pearce



OCCASIONALLY one lets slip a remark which has behind it deeper convictions than are acknowledged. I did so with an observation in this column about the Falkland Islands War. I find myself civilly taxed for it but feel profoundly unrepentant.

I will be asked: "Why bring this issue up? Why not accept that a highly satisfactory victory has been won, or at least

that the world perceives it as such a triumph?" But the present continuous tense in which we live is history and it is necessarily subject to revision, not least as the heady emotional moods of wartime recede. I acknowledge on my part an initial hostility to the whole business. I recall saying "Bodies will finish in the water before this week's rhetoric is done." But like very many people who entertain sentiments of ordinary respect and regard for their own country, I reacted to the start of the *fighting* by unequivocally identifying with our side, and saying so.

Time has passed. We are nearly three years on from that fighting, though the cash payments continue. It is time to look back and wonder if the expedition makes sense in retrospect. I believe that it does not, that it was a misconceived enterprise, that the Government was itself caught up in day-to-day expedients and subjected to pressures which do not seem reasonable today.

I subtract not a farthing from the great heroism of those who fought. I acknowledge that nations have within themselves a need for self-respect, and that it is the strange nature of "little wars" that they release perfectly honourable, long sneered-at feelings which I more nearly share than I absent myself from. But wars, though sometimes necessary, should not be fought because they make you feel good.

And what about Grenada? If the Falklands is mistaken, can Grenada be right? Frankly, in solid Machiavellian terms Grenada made sense as the pre-emptive act of a great power which saw the early traces of another great power's influence within neighbouring territory, and acted. In terms of rational self-interest the Grenada expedition, for all the froth and drum-beating which followed, did have utility. For a country as

little involved in the South Atlantic as ourselves, we have to ask what utility the Falklands War had. Alas, I see none.

How did we come to fight this infinitely futile, infinitely sad campaign, this toy-town parody with real blood? At the time we almost all cheered or at least applauded—and some are cheering still though the bills roll in and the utility of those few thousand acres of waterlogged, grade-five agricultural land, where thirteen acres will support a single sheep, seems more mystifying than ever.

Let me start anecdotally. The Anglo-German Königswinter conference of 1982 took place that April in St Catharine's College, Cambridge. We split for study sessions into four groups. I attended the one on foreign policy, and had just listened with mounting exasperation to an elder statesman expounding on the proper Foreign Office conduct of foreign policy as not understood by the Americans. "The Americans", he drawled, "have got themselves into a frightful tizzy over some place or other called El Sal-va-dor. The Foreign Office is wiser in these matters. We would have trouble finding it on a map, and we would have left the whole matter in the hands of a junior officer. . . ." (None of this, as one keeps having to say, am I making up.) He had no sooner sat down, with the Americans duly reprimanded for their jumpy seriousness, than a messenger entered who handed to the Chairman a note. "I feel", said the Chairman, one of our most distinguished historians, "that I should interrupt to let you know that Argentine forces have landed in the Falklands." That episode says more about the FO view than I could hope to.

What followed the world well knows, though it forgets bits. On the very next day, a Saturday, Parliament was recalled. The hysteria, violence of language, and abandonment of reason which took place that day mark it off as one of the worst performances which the House has collectively given. "All power to little silly men" seemed to be the order of the day. Mr Patrick Cormack was listened to seriously, an experience unlikely to be repeated. The old Tory Right, the Suez group, the men in mourning for an impossibilist dream of military authority within the world, came from the withered margins of politics and were listened to fearfully and with respect. Julian Amery's view of the world briefly came true. It is not something which must ever happen again.

For myself I remained certain that war would be unthinkable, that the talk of an expedition had to subside. I was utterly wrong. We went for several months through a period of collective irrationality and I readily confess, having initially used my mind, to having joined the mob and closed it again. I wrote in defence of this war, for which I apologise. Once a war starts, however foolish, however morally wrong, the feeling that this is, after all, our country becomes formidable.

One of the stories out of the great Falklands trek, recorded by Charles Laurence, who filed some of the very finest copy of the war, concerned the reliance by the British Army for its "yomp" upon Mars Bars. Since they are high in glucose content, this is entirely sensible. They helped sustain a brave and admirable army whose achievement is not diminished by the vain and desolating folly of those who sent them. But the rest of Britain was also on Mars Bars—which can be sticky, glutinous, and bad for your teeth. Fleet Street was at its most patriotic and rabid. If there had been a well-known Argen-

tinian dog we would have been encouraged to kick it. But it is also true that the British needed emotionally to fight *somebody*.

For a quarter-of-a-century since Suez, the opponents of military reflexes had dominated politics. Suez itself, the last emotional blow-out of the Julian Amery/brigadier element, had ended in a humiliation which unpleasingly delighted the Left. And in the last analysis the unintelligent but very honest patriot is a more attractive man than the sneering Left-wing lecturer who enjoys national humiliation. After Suez, the cartoon character George Weber, in anorak and with placard, had had things pretty much his own way. The assumption that we are as a nation not entitled to stand up for ourselves—that the United Nations is a better homeland, that when humiliations come they should be welcomed, that the only good war was the sort waged by Ho Chi Minh or Robert Mugabe—represented a sustained inversion of natural loyalties which the generality of us find quite dismaying. But this outlook ruled as the bottom line of foreign politics. So much so that if General Galtieri had taken the precaution of being a bearded man in self-consciously worn, frayed fatigues, quoting Sartre to delighted correspondents, war against him would have been unthinkable. Would we, would Mrs Thatcher, have dared send an expedition against General Torrijos, who gave so much delight to one of the sour spirits of the age, Graham Greene?

As it was, poor Galtieri was an honorary South African, a right-wing *caudillo* of the kind which Spanish colonialism throws up all the time. War was deemed to be bad, but war against a South American dictator had two things going for it. On the Left of the spectrum, it was half-way accredited by being directed at an authentic two-star bogey. On the thinking Right, away from the Cormacks and Amerys, it had the virtue of being (like Grenada, later) winnable. Argentina is not a small country but, notoriously, it is inefficient, unheroic, and liable to fall over if pushed. The purpose of the *Exocet* missile, however, like the revolver in Damon Runyon, is of being "the old equaliser." Even an Argentinian can sink a capital ship with one of these. How far Admiral Lord Lewin had thought that out, who shall say? But perhaps the true point of the *Belgrano* episode may be that British military command did not at any time share the smoky euphoria of Parliament and Public, and looked upon any enemy ship as something to be dispatched to the bottom pretty damn quick by way of a "teaching strike."

INTO SUCH MORAL MESSES, such requirements of compound-ing death with death, do you get if war is undertaken to satisfy a yearning rather than as something within one's full capacities. For the conventional means of death, unnoticed by the unilateralist nuclear disarmers, have gone up a hundredfold. The winners of all small wars are those whose new conventional rockets or armour-plate have done best in their field-trials. Alan Clark was quoted as saying that if you fight a war, "World opinion doesn't give a damn, world opinion is queuing up to buy the kit you won it with. . . ." I have no indignant rebuttal for Mr Clark's cheerful cynicism, which after the mood of piety, thanksgiving, and damp-handkerchiefed legal self-justification is something of a relief. But the kit most

people were queuing up to buy after the Falklands War was the *Exocet*, manufactured in France, supplied to Argentina, and used with some notable effect to sink British ships and kill British sailors.

This is a crude and obvious point which out of the delicate feelings we have for our own pride tends not to be made. What precisely did we get out of the Falklands War except a warm glow, the experience of feeling good, and a Roll of Honour?

We now have back on our hands what *The Times*, perhaps after conversation with the Foreign Office, called "these paltry islands." We have 1,800 people for whom the British government spent an uncomputable sum running into billions, when in respect of similar communities on St Helena and elsewhere it will not invest a penny beyond its fixed pathetic allocation to raise them from the chronic unemployment and depression which characterises such small groupings. So we didn't spend the money we spent, or throw away the lives we caused to be ended, out of disinterested concern for the Falklanders. It would have been possible at a trivial proportion of the war outlay, never mind the money which we are now spending, to have resettled every Falkland family bloodlessly in New Zealand, Westmorland, or wherever it is that shepherds and sheep like to be. Instead we budgeted for the death of troops and for the expenditure of money systematically denied to a hundred peaceful uses in the preceding course of the Government's expenditure cuts.

A greater contradiction than combining strict monetary control with fighting a war in the South Atlantic is not to be found in the wildest jungles of fantasy. But that fantasy has been compounded by the subsequent "Fortress Falklands" policy, which involves a major garrison for this mudbank, and the building of Heathrow's long-awaited Terminal 5 . . . at Port Stanley, so that Tri-Stars and other sophisticated planes can supply the Army of the South Atlantic. We are standing in the rain tearing up banker's drafts.

Sooner or later, when the last brass instrument is silenced and when the red-faced patriots are not looking, the Falkland Islands, under whatever form of words we hit upon, will have to be ceded to the Argentinians because those islands are there and we are *here*. Stuff legal titles and stuff certainly the comic-opera nationalism of Argentina's own red-faced patriots. If the citizens of that melancholy country really want those islands, they will do the Argentinians no very great good and us no discernible harm, and it will not be irrational to hand them over. The British will come to see in time that the grotesque episode of 1982 was pure therapy. We were a great power; we have ceased to be a great power; we shall, alas never again be a great power. We are an Adlerian case, afflicted by an inferiority complex and needing to cut notches on a stick.

The war we undertook nearly three years ago was fought by the men concerned very bravely and efficiently. We learned in the field what we knew in principle: that the reduced British Army is very good indeed. But did we deter any enemies, did we do ourselves any tangible good? Surely not. This was in all senses of the word, including the narcotic, a trip.

The British, with Mrs Thatcher at their head, came out high. It was a collective act of retarded adolescence, and we all cheered. The patriotic card was played and we all fell for it. That is just a trifle hard. I don't personally think that the

Government was wicked, cynical or calculating; and I find the Raymond Briggs-E. P. Thompson approach so much standard Left-wing knee-jerking. The British Government never looked as if they knew what they were doing. The Foreign Office, leaving a junior official in charge and pushing insouciance to the point of hilarity, managed to leave the impression with the Argentinians, mistaken or otherwise, that a cathartic act of invasion would actually disembarass them. At the same time cuts in the Navy and in the Falklands garrison, reducing it to 80 men, suggested perfectly reasonably that a conquest was capable of achievement which, give or take a measure of puff-and-blow indignation, would not be resisted.

This was professional incompetence of the very highest kind. Those Foreign Office Ministers who lost their jobs afterwards deserved to lose them (and Civil Servants should have too). The newspaper image of chivalrous highmindedness by the resigning ensemble of graceful incompetents who brought off this alpha-class bungle is just one more piece of fatuous British deferential self-deception. The Falklands, if you really wanted them, could have been kept at the expense of another 100 soldiers and a plain, unequivocal, private statement that Argentine involvement of any kind was not wanted. If speech had not been fork-tongued, guile would not have doubled back and done us an injury. But when the paper-and-lath structure of defence and foreign policy first encouraged and then made possible an invasion, the British Government was trapped. It was given a choice between humiliation and war. With the baying dogs behind, it chose war.

This involved a measure of military gambling which made victory uncertain (not what any aggressor intends) and the deaths of very many servicemen a racing certainty. For, as the Government well knew from Day One, we had nothing which could remotely be called air cover. The extent of that gamble is underlined not only in the graveyards and plastic-surgery wards where so many Welch Fusiliers finished up, but in the fact that if the Argentines had wired their fuses better, two and perhaps three other capital ships would have gone down. If they had, not even the *Daily Mail*, the Government's little drummer-boy, could have sold this bizarre war as a triumph.

As it was, the Government—to a degree we shall not fully understand until all papers are released long hence—played a game betwixt bluff and war. The Opposition went along, partly because the public mood which fogged the rest of us got at them, partly in an unacknowledged hope that things would come bloodlessly unstuck, that at some point south of Ascension Island we would turn and sail for home, muttering darkly and proclaiming in the accents of Suez that we had put out a forest fire and that our mission was accomplished. Mr Edward Heath in one of his celebrated interventions called essentially for this. A large part of the Opposition, brought up like everyone else on the inevitable humiliation of the British in all modern conflicts of will from UDI to UHT, waited for withdrawal and made supportive noises until that humiliation should come. By a piece of good soldiering and by uncovenanted good luck from non-exploding shells (and because Mrs Thatcher plunged deeper at the gaming table than ever expected), the war was won and a gamble became a triumph.

It remains, as I now think, the most discreditable, amoral,

and improper episode in British post-War history, a gamble not worth the taking, a war fought for reasons of *amour propre* mingled with electoral considerations as the long expedition went on, a pathetic attempt to pretend to ourselves that we were other than we are, a pantomime war in which men had their faces burned off.

Neil Kinnock got into dreadful trouble with the Tory press for responding to a heckler who alluded to Mrs Thatcher's "guts", that it was "a pity some people had to leave theirs on the beach to prove hers." In my view, Mr Kinnock was categorically right, and morally he scored right between the eyes when he said that.

THIS WAR WAS OF NO MORE IMPORT that the one between the big-enders and the little-enders. The most you can say is that fortuitously it accelerated the already expected interlude of liberal democratic government in Argentina which will precede the next military régime (the British are no more interested in liberal democracy in the Argentine than in Ungo-Bungoland; and indeed it is none of our business). At the end of the day Mrs T. gave herself something to rejoice at, extricated the islands, and held a Roman triumph. But the Falklands remain worthless; the cost of supporting and defending them has turned nightmarish; and thirteen hundred men, 258 of ours, and over 1,000 Argentinians, were drowned, blown up, or scorched to death.

The *corpus delicti* remains, sodden, emblematic, morosely pleasing to sheep, and the inducer of folly in two second-rate countries in decline. It is as much material use as that plot of land for which Fortinbras went to war.

*We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name—
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it. . . .
Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats
Will not debate the question of this straw.*

What *have* we done to be drawn into such folly and death and still be proud of it?

A Look to the Future

By Julian Amery

EDWARD PEARCE'S invective is as brilliant as ever, but what has happened to his political imagination? Can't he see beyond the end of his nose? Just because the Falklands are 8,000 miles away he sees them as those "sodden emblematic islands" which will have to be ceded to the Argentine just because "they are there and we are *here*."

The Spanish establishment thought much the same when Christopher Columbus landed on an outcrop in the Caribbean and was put into gaol on his return. Had they written off his discovery, as Pearce writes off our recovery of the Falklands, there would have been no Mexico or Peru. Yet modern Europe rose very largely on the discovery of the

Americas and their wealth. If Pearce would only look he would see that the Falklands are not the end of the road but the Clapham Junction from which the South Atlantic and the Antarctic continent could be developed very much to our advantage and the world's.

The South Atlantic is important strategically. When the Suez Canal is closed, and it has been closed twice since the Second World War, Europe's trade with the Indian Ocean and the Gulf has had to go round the Cape of Good Hope and through the South Atlantic. If the Panama Canal were closed the trade of the North American West Coast—now the centre of gravity of the US economy—would have to go round Cape Horn. There may be no immediate threat but the potential threat is plain enough; to guard against it calls for an effective base under a stable government. None of the South American or African riparian States offer the necessary political stability. The British Falkland Islands, with their new fully-developed airfield and improved harbour facilities, could provide an excellent communications and headquarters centre.

The South Atlantic has economic importance too: it is rich in fish which the Russians, the Poles, and the Japanese are busy harvesting; and there are also substantial hydrocarbon deposits. With the present oil glut they may not be worth developing, but the swing from oil glut to oil shortage could be pretty rapid.

THEN THERE IS the Antarctic continent itself. Geologists believe that the basic structure of the Antarctic continent is a continuation of the Andes mountain chain and the Southern African plateau. There is thus a reasonable chance that the minerals present in the Andes and in South Africa may lie in some quantity under the Antarctic permafrost. To extract them would be a problem, but surely nothing like putting a man on the moon. The job could only be done commercially by a very large multinational consortium. But from where would this consortium operate? Of all the points close to the Antarctic continent the Falklands would seem to offer the best prospects of political and economic stability. Given good air-communications and a small but effective garrison, the likelihood of a renewed Argentine invasion is remote.

Nor should we think of our relations with the Argentine in purely adversary terms. The best guarantee for stability would be to bring the Argentine, Chile, South Africa, and other riparian states, with the backing of the USA and the European Community, into a new South Atlantic community. One task of this community would be to assure the security of the South Atlantic sea and air routes; another could be the development of the Antarctic.

The claims of the Antarctic Treaty signatories are frozen until 1991—but Britain, Argentina and Chile all have extensive claims, and they overlap. What a hopeful opportunity for putting our claims together and developing them as a syndicate.

With the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies and Ascension Island with its airfield, Britain is very much a South Atlantic power. How foolish it would be to withdraw from the one bastion which gives us national access to an unexplored continent and an unpopulated one at that. Again,

a remarkable challenge to act as a catalyst to activate the other interested parties.

PEARCE'S THINKING is as wet as the Falklands are damp. He sees our victory as purely pyrrhic. But his eyes are closed to the opportunities it has brought. Of course he is right to say that had we developed the airfield in the 1970s—and had a battalion instead of a company as a garrison—there would have been no war. Had we made it plain that we had no intention of giving up the islands there would almost certainly have been much more private investment in their development than there was.

To be sure, the British Foreign Office is much to blame for seeking, in the noontide of decolonisation, to get rid of what they (like Pearce) saw as a burden rather than an opportunity. Parliament, operating by general national instinct rather than by shortsighted logic, always took a different view, and shot down every attempt by Governments of all parties to abdicate our responsibilities. Mrs Thatcher, proceeding on the same wave-length, sent in a task force and won. Yes, Pearce, it was a gamble, 8,000 miles from base and without adequate air cover; but it came off. Isn't that how the Elizabethan adventurers raised us from an island off the continent to become a great power?

Now, Pearce, you would have us throw away the prize for which our men fought and died and the prize that may lie beyond in the waters and under the ice of the Antarctic. In my view, it would be inflicting a wound on our national morale. Think of the consequences of telling our people who rejoiced in the Falklands victory that they have to abandon the prize to the very people who despoiled the islands and whom we defeated. Could we ever look ourselves in the face again? Yes, there were 250 British dead; this was the price we paid for previous negligence. Yes, the battle was won by our forces but the war could not have been won without the wholehearted support of the British people, and it was forthcoming.

Latin-American "solidarity"? It doesn't exist. We now know that once General Galtieri had decided to externalise his internal problems he debated whether to attack the Falklands or Chile. Surely we have had enough experience of Arab and African "solidarity" to know how little all this means in practice.

In victory magnanimity? Yes, Churchill was right; but we didn't let the Germans off all that lightly, and we certainly did not give Dr Adenauer's Federal Republic the lands which Hitler had claimed and seized. What we did do, and Churchill foremost of all, was to lay the foundations of a European Community into which France and Britain could lead Germany by the hand and so bring her back, as has transpired, into the family of Europe. Cannot we do the same in the South Atlantic and lead a bankrupt and defeated Argentina into a South Atlantic community embracing Chile and all the other interested parties?

Look beyond your nose, Pearce: and try and see through the clouds that so often cover the Falklands. Try at least to glimpse the opportunity for political reconciliation and the innovative creation of new wealth which these British islands could afford us and mankind.

LETTERS

"Kremlinology"

THE ARGUMENTS of both Ambassador Max Kampelman and Dr George Urban ("Can We Negotiate with the Russians?", *ENCOUNTER*, February and March 1985) are based on some basic view of Soviet society, and it is doubtless a "Kremlinological" one. Accordingly, I have gone back to your fundamental study on the subject ("The Arcane Art of Kremlinology", *ENCOUNTER*, March 1983), and I hope my remarks on it will also be pertinent to the Kampelman-Urban discussion.

While making justified and realistic observations on the weaknesses of "Kremlinology" and the nature of the Soviet system, Professor R. V. Burks engages in a kind of shadow-boxing with what he calls Soviet reality—and ends up with similar misjudgments to the Kremlinologist he justly criticises.

Burks lines up six contingencies from which the reader has to make a selective decision, although "historians and political scientists have only some general and rather divergent notions about the inner nature of the Soviet régime." But what strategies can be developed, if a deeper understanding of the nature of totalitarianism does not yet exist, or is not yet generally accepted? Burks speaks of the inadequacy of the "underlying models", which state that the Soviet system "is either inherently dangerous to the rest of the world unless destroyed" or that it is becoming "authoritarian", and, if given some Western financial help is capable of "essentially peaceful . . . evolution in a pluralist direction." Without any guidance the poor reader is left sitting on the fence in this vital dilemma!

The author goes on to ponder about the "political fragility" of a system which cannot maintain itself without the forces of police and the military. I feel that with more justice the opposite can be argued. The Soviet system has proved to possess an enormous stability once it has completed the social atomisation of its citizens, preventing and forestalling any forms of ideological criticism or opposition. The police are only one of the manifold means of obtaining the aims of such a dictatorship. It is commonplace to write about the weaknesses of Soviet "Planned Economy." But what about the strength of the totalitarian system once it has permeated the whole social fabric? Obviously, its economy is inefficient, and makes the citizens poorer year by year. But the political strength of the Soviet structure is such that it has created millions of beneficiaries, not just in the commanding Party, but in all administrative offices in factories, in education, in research (apart from the huge military complex), and so on. People would

seem to be more conservatively inclined; can they any longer really envisage a change in the system? Do they see any alternative after over 60 years of terror and dictatorship?

IT IS IMPORTANT to realise that the crises which the Soviet people have experienced in all these years would have swept away any democratic government hundreds of times. However, the Soviet dictatorship has always survived "*politically*"! This ought to disprove any talk of inherent "fragility." It is true, any crack in the political structure of the Communist system would be dangerous, impossible to undertake or tolerate, but the term "fragility" evokes the impression of objective weakness, as if "it could happen overnight . . ."

It seems to me the opposite is true. The Soviet dictatorship is now *total*, as it has successfully isolated its citizens from each other—and from the world at large; at the

same time, millions have become in one way or the other beneficiaries of the present system. In their decisive numbers, in high and low positions, they live out their daily lives not unhappily, and remain "tolerant" and "conservative" mainly for lack of choice. Thus, it is, in my opinion, misleading to speak of a "disaffected élite" waiting for the day off of the man-at-arms. Both Urban and Kampelman hesitate to predict an end to the Soviet dictatorship, but seem to await a thaw, a humanisation, an "historic compromise."

Burks made a very interesting remark: "I have tended to move in the opposite direction although I am far from holding that 'destruction' is an acceptable or necessary solution." My question is: moving in new directions is perfectly all right, but do we know where the journey is taking us?

ERNST LOWE

London

Darkness unto Death

WHEN I READ earlier *ENCOUNTER* articles by Mr Edward Pearce, I thought here is an intellectual of a rare quality who is not afraid to expose the truth in sensitive areas, where others conceal or distort it beyond recognition. His article "Darkness unto Death" [*ENCOUNTER*, March 1984] dispelled my admiration completely. The assessment of the Northern Ireland tragedy must have been written from his darkest intellectual *sanctum sanctorum*—"My country right or wrong", where the light of objectivity and truth does not penetrate.

No doubt, both sides must be blamed. The Roman Catholic Church, like any other inflexible, unyielding and powerful body, does not contribute a whit to solving the tragedy, but the cause of the tragedy of Northern Ireland is the inflexible and unyielding power of the Orange Order. History teaches us that those who enjoy such power never concede at a round table. And when the killing starts they "do not deal with Terrorists", and so their dirty consciences are of the purest white. The *ultima ratio regum* is only recognised in the club where the killing is legalised as in war between nations.

It is not true that Ireland was never previously united as one country as Mr Pearce says. It was, until England colonised it, exploited it, and finally divided it—allowing the Protestants to establish, unchecked, a socio-political system of a near master and slave nature. That system did not change radically for the last four centuries as democracy and human dignity grew stronger elsewhere, in the affairs of men. The Catholic minority in Northern Ireland is still denied today the basic human rights. The sharing of political power is constantly refused. Discrimination exists in schooling, in jobs, in career promotion, and generally the minority is considered as second-class citizens.

On the mainland the Irish are considered as pigs, sub-humans, stupid, and not able to understand democracy. In this context, we have to consider the possibility that if people are for centuries treated as sub-humans, generation after generation, some of them are most likely to become just that. And if true democracy was practised in Northern Ireland the minority would recognise it and respect it. We may have great pleasure laughing at the plethora of jokes about the Irish, admiring a cup with the handle on the inside; but, who knows, maybe the terrorists have a laugh at our expense, when planting a bomb.

The Jews believe that they are the Chosen People. The Germans claimed to be the Master Race and the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants are convinced that their mission in life is to rule over other peoples. Britannia rules the waves, and God created the earth and Englishmen . . . Anybody that is not WASP is automatically inferior and contemptible.

AND THUS carries on Mr Pearce, Ireland is a small nation, certainly incompetent, not like the superb British soldiers, because it could not capture the Mission Church killers. The Government in Dublin is called "a régime" whereas Ulster carries the noble name of "parliament." Dublin would panic and beseech the English to stay, should they decide to leave because the inferior régime cannot begin to cope with the American-armed, Soviet-influenced terrorism that hates the Republic more than it hates Britain . . . What an extraordinary analysis, to put it mildly. IRA terrorism is not of Soviet making but Russia's influence is real, everywhere, and particularly where democracy fails to deliver what it preaches. That much even Mr Pearce would admit. The analogy with Grenada where the Russian threat was